United Nations A/71/PV.71

General Assembly

Seventy-first session

Official Records

71st plenary meeting
Friday, 10 March 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 138 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/71/764/Add.1, A/71/764/Add.2, A/71/764/Add.3 and A/71/764/Add.4)

The President: I should like, in keeping with established practice, to draw the attention of the General Assembly to documents A/71/764/Add.1 through Add.4, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/71/764, Cabo Verde, Djibouti, Dominica, the Marshall Islands, Papua New Guinea and Yemen have made the payments necessary to reduce their arrears below the amounts specified in Article 19 of the Charter.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in documents A/71/764/Add.1 through Add. 4?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 123 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the United Nations system

Draft resolution (A/71/L.59)

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/71/L.59.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt): I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of the following countries: Bangladesh, China, Ethiopia, Jordan, Morocco, Nigeria and Pakistan.

At the outset, I would like to thank you, Sir, for organizing this important meeting. Let me start by quoting the Secretary-General from his latest report, issued yesterday, on measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse:

> "The men and women who serve the causes of the United Nations do so with selflessness and pride under challenging conditions — always difficult, sometimes remote, often austere and dangerous. Together, we promise to protect the weak, aid those in need, uphold the dignity of every human being and serve the cause of peace. We who take this promise seriously will not be complacent. We will not allow the behaviour of anyone who exploits the vulnerable and destroys lives to soil our reputations, diminish our contributions, sow disillusion among our champions or undermine our values." (*A/71/818, para. 4*).

The draft resolution presented to the Assembly today represents a first milestone towards a system-wide approach for the implementation of the zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse. It represents an opportunity to support the efforts of the Secretary-General to prevent impunity. The draft resolution also presents a genuine opportunity for this membership to collectively unite to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse. It places victims at the core of the United Nations efforts by providing them with justice and assistance in combating such

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acts, and calls on those responsible to end impunity and to ensure accountability, while also calling for strengthening and enhancing transparency within the United Nations system.

While acknowledging that the actions of a few will not be allowed to tarnish the achievement of the whole, the presenters of this draft resolution, being major troop and police contributors, for the first time since its adoption, recognize Security Council resolution 2272 (2016), which authorizes the Secretary-General to repatriate troops who have not taken appropriate measures to prevent and hold accountable their personnel. In that regard, it requests the Secretary-General to work with troop- and police-contributing countries to implement this decision.

Finally, I would like to thank the general membership, which has worked tirelessly over the past week to agree on this consensual document. This indeed proves that when women and children are victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. The membership will spare no effort to bring them justice and to collectively act to protect those who rely on the United Nations for protection. The troop- and police-contributing countries presenting this draft resolution took it upon themselves to lead this effort in order to send a strong, unequivocal message that it is our responsibility to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, not just among uniformed personnel but also across the United Nations system. We owe it to the international community and to the world to adopt this draft resolution.

The President: We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/71/L.59.

Before giving the floor to the speaker in explanation of vote before the voting, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of the Philippines.

Mr. Nayan (Philippines): We recall that Secretary-General António Guterres, who as early as April 2016, when he was still then a candidate for the post, called for eradicating once and for all the exploitative and abusive conduct of those United Nations agents who do not represent what the Organization stands for. Yesterday the report (A/71/818) of the Secretary-General on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse was issued, representing a new approach that focuses on the imperative to address the issue through a system-wide approach that seeks to build a strong partnerhsip with Member States. Today, we have draft resolution A/71/L.59 before us on this very issue, which if not addressed will continue to tarnish the image of the Organization.

While the Philippines supports the draft resolution and recognizes the initiative of some of our fellow troop-contributing countries as main sponsors of the draft resolution, we wish to convey the following concerns.

First, on the process, the draft resolution, while presented as a consensus text, was not formulated through a more transparent and inclusive process of consultations with Member States that would have allowed all views to be heard and considered. A very tight timeline and a rush to adopt the draft resolution did not allow us to consider fully the just-issued report of the Secretary-General, which could have enriched our discussions and the draft resolution.

Secondly, on substance, we would have wanted the draft resolution to highlight the protection of children, the most vulnerable and most in need of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, especially in conflict situations. It is an inherent priority within the broader obligations of the United Nations to protect civilians. Today, six peacekeeping missions and three special political missions have child-protection mandates. More than 100 child-protection staff are deployed to these missions. This clearly illustrates that children are extremely vulnerable members of communities where peacekeeping missions operate, and that peacekeepers have an obligation to both promote and adhere to international norms and standards developed by Member States on child protection.

We all agree that the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse not only undermines the values and principles of the United Nations but also erodes the trust of the peoples we have vowed to protect. It is inexcusable; it is unacceptable; it has no place in the United Nations system. The Philippines stands in solidarity with the community of responsible nations and remains steadfastly committed to ending sexual violence whenever and wherever it occurs. We will continue to hold our Philippines troops accountable to the highest standards of conduct.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/71/L.59, entitled "United Nations action on sexual exploitation and abuse".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. Pollard (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that, since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/71/L.59: Belarus, Benin, Djibouti, Eritrea, Indonesia, Nepal, the Niger, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, Suriname and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/71/L.59?

Draft resolution A/71/L.59 was adopted (resolution 71/278).

The President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Iguanez (Malta): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this position.

The EU promotes collective action to maintain and implement the highest standards of conduct and to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse. We strongly support the Secretary-General's leadership in dealing with this difficult challenge, which calls for a system-wide response based on the pillars of prevention, enforcement, victim support and accountability.

The EU welcomes the efforts of the Secretary-General to work closely with Member States on structural, legal and operational measures to make zero tolerance a reality, and advocates a victim-centred strategy rooted in transparency, accountability and ensuring justice. The establishment of the task force on United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse is a clear sign of the Secretary-General's determination to develop an ambitious new approach to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse committed by those serving under the United Nations flag. The EU and its member States look forward to studying in detail the report (A/71/818) submitted by the Secretary-General yesterday.

Almost exactly one year ago, the adoption of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) was an important step, on which the General Assembly should build and develop further actions for a system-wide approach. General Assembly resolution 70/286, on peacekeeping cross-cutting issues, addresses this issue in a comprehensive and transparent way and provides for the necessary tools to effectively enforce a zero-tolerance policy and represents another major step forward in the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse. Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, recognizes that women and girls are more often the targets of sexual exploitation and abuse, due to the embedded gender inequality in societies, which is yet another important aspect of our common efforts.

There must be no backsliding on what we have agreed; we owe it to the victims and our own contingents to set high standards and stick to them. We must stand by the objective of enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations in delivering. In that spirit, the European Union would have preferred to undertake collective efforts to upgrade our action in a consistent and inclusive manner, in the framework of due and equitable consultation with all stakeholders. Added value can be achieved only through a collaborative and trustful atmosphere aimed at providing a comprehensive response to a comprehensive problem within an appropriate time frame. Instead, partners were forced into a distracting and rushed process that could have potentially jeopardized the integrity of our results achieved so far.

Even if consensus were eventually achieved due to flexibility on all sides, the path leading to it missed an opportunity to explore the full potential of our efforts, including the results of ongoing discussions in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (Committee of 34). We missed an opportunity to take important steps forward on this issue, which is regrettable. In addition, this came at a time when we have a clear signal from the Secretary-General and there is need for the General Assembly membership to unify around the objective of achieving the highest standards.

While we are not opposed in principle to discussing sexual exploitation and abuse in the plenary, we wish

to underline that this cannot preclude the mandates of governing structures such as the Committee of 34, the Fifth Committee and the Sixth Committee. We will continue our work to strengthen the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse in the competent committees.

The European Union and its member States have consistently expressed their principled position on the policy of zero tolerance, and therefore the approach of zero impunity for all United Nations personnel and personnel serving under United Nations mandates, as advocated by the Secretary-General. The European Union encourages enhanced coordination and collaboration across the United Nations in this regard, and will spare no effort to build a system-wide approach to sexual exploitation and abuse through genuine consultation and cooperation.

The European Union and its member States are committed to working in the long term with the Secretariat and in a spirit of genuine cooperation with all troop-contributing countries and all stakeholders in combating and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, including through the training of all personnel, ensuring that allegations are duly investigated and that justice is served by the countries that contributed the personnel, and in providing victims with the assistance they require.

Ms. Wilson (Australia): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of a broad group of countries, including Canada, New Zealand and Switzerland, in addition to the Philippines and Liechtenstein.

We welcome this opportunity for the General Assembly to take a strong position against sexual exploitation and abuse. We condemn in the strongest terms all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel and staff, including against children, who are often the most vulnerable. Not only is sexual exploitation an egregious betrayal of trust, but it undermines the ability of United Nations staff and representatives to effectively carry out their mission, including on peacekeeping missions. In that regard, Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) was a milestone and a positive step in the right direction.

We have mixed feelings about the adoption of resolution 71/278 today. We feel that we have a resolution that is far from what it could have been in terms of its ambition, and we firmly believe that the General Assembly is capable of so much more. Nevertheless, the group welcomes the inclusion of language that affirms the application of the zero-tolerance policy across the whole United Nations system, the recognition that a culture of impunity can lead to more sexual exploitation and abuse being committed, the centrality of victims in all our efforts and the request for the Secretary-General to immediately inform Member States concerned about any allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. We hope that this is interpreted by the Secretary-General to ensure much greater transparency.

Mr. Pecsteen de Buytswerve (Belgium), Vice-President, took the Chair.

On the other hand, we also feel that, in many ways, this was a missed opportunity, and we are left with the feeling of concern and frustration with the rushed process. The importance of taking a strong stand against sexual exploitation and abuse means that this critical issue, which is of such fundamental importance to the United Nations, deserves strong and due consideration across the full membership. We do not believe that the process allowed for the broadest possible consultation. For a process that aimed at increasing the transparency of the United Nations in addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, it is regrettable that the facilitators chose working methods that did not encourage it.

Looking ahead, let us challenge ourselves to truly work together and concretely move the issue forward to engender a system-wide approach to sexual exploitation and abuse. We must build on the positive momentum of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) and this resolution. We commend the Secretary-General's efforts thus far to achieve not just a zero-tolerance policy, but a zero-case reality. We welcome the Secretary-General's report (A/71/818) on sexual exploitation and abuse that was released yesterday and, again, are very supportive of the victim-centred strategy that is rooted in transparency, accountability and justice. We look forward to discussing it further.

Ms. Connelly (United States of America): The United States welcomes this opportunity to reaffirm its commitment to effectively addressing the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse and to reaffirming its collective support for the United Nations zero-tolerance policy and the Secretary-General's efforts to strengthen its implementation.

Sexual exploitation and abuse inflict significant harm on vulnerable communities — the very communities that look to the United Nations for

protection and assistance in some of the world's most dangerous places. It also undermines the legitimacy and effectiveness of the United Nations, in particular, when those responsible are not held to account for their deplorable acts. The United States will continue to welcome future engagement with Member States on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.

The General Assembly has adopted two recent resolutions on sexual exploitation and abuse. First, resolution 70/286 was adopted in June 2016, following consideration of the Secretary-General's report (A/70/729) on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. In December, the Assembly then adopted resolution 71/134, on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission. In both resolutions, the Assembly welcomed the Secretary-General's determination to fully implement the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, reaffirmed the need for enhanced coordination for victim support and agreed to increase transparency measures regarding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, annual and ongoing discussions in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations on conduct and discipline address aspects of that important issue.

My delegation commends the Assembly for working constructively towards a resolution. That consensus reflects Member State support for the Secretary-General in implementing the sexual exploitation and abuse zero-tolerance policy. It is the result of many delegations' hard work, flexibility and commitment to addressing the issue.

We would like to align ourselves with the statement made on behalf of Canada, Australia and New Zealand. While we welcome this agreement by consensus, we believe that this process and its related timelines could have been more broadly consultative, taking into account the level of interest of many different delegations to positively contribute to its outcome.

The United States firmly supports the authority of the Secretary-General to implement the United Nations zero-tolerance policy. We reaffirm his particular obligation to repatriate any peacekeeping units that engage in a pattern of systematic sexual exploitation and abuse and replace contingents whose Governments fail to properly investigate allegations or hold accountable those found responsible. Sexual exploitation and abuse are a problem throughout the United Nations, including the funds and programmes, and Member States and the United Nations, through all of its relevant organs, must work together to prevent acts of sexual exploitation and abuse, hold perpetrators to account and help victims receive the assistance that they need.

Today we affirm that we must all continue to do our utmost to address this cancer wherever it may exist in the United Nations system and promote accountability for perpetrators of those unacceptable acts.

Mrs. Carrión (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*) First, I would like to reiterate that, as a State Member of the Organization and a troop- and police-contributing country with a long history of participating in various peacekeeping operations, Uruguay attaches the utmost importance to combating cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. In that regard, Uruguay is extremely committed to the zero-tolerance policy in addressing such cases. Similarly, I would like to underscore that, in confronting such incidents, Uruguay has made steady progress in that area by ensuring greater prevention through predeployment training, appropriate oversight in the field and adequate leadership at all levels. There has not been a single case of sexual exploitation and abuse in which a Uruguayan has been involved that has not been properly and expeditiously resolved through due process with the maximum guarantees afforded to the accuser and accused and through taking the appropriate measures with regard to those found responsible for the alleged acts.

Uruguay expresses its satisfaction following the adoption of resolution 70/286, which sends a strong and clear message of condemnation of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as its support for the efforts of the Secretary-General in combating this scourge. However, my delegation would like to align itself with various other delegations in expressing its concern and frustration at the way in which the negotiation process of the resolution was conducted.

The negotiation and adoption of a General Assembly resolution require a reasonable amount of time to conduct consultations among all States Members of the Organization to achieve a quality and consensus-based product. Uruguay believes that the process imposed by the facilitators of the resolution did not take place in a constructive spirit and seriously undermines the transparency and inclusivity that negotiations within the framework of the General Assembly must have.

Since the submission of the first draft on Friday, 3 March, numerous delegations, including Uruguay's, had called for more time in order to receive instructions from their capitals, and those requests were ignored by the facilitators. Moreover, we note that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, which is discussing the topic of exploitation and sexual abuse, has been meeting simultaneously on a daily basis with several working subgroups, and the overlap of those negotiations with negotiations on this resolution has affected many Permanent Missions' ability to participate in both processes — an undesirable situation that could have been avoided by agreeing to postponing its adoption for a later date. Similarly, extending the deadline for the adoption of the resolution might have enabled us to have some information relevant to the negotiations, such as the report (A/71/818) of the Secretary-General on sexual exploitation and abuse, which was issued only yesterday.

In conclusion, my delegation believes that, while this resolution is a positive step towards dealing with sexual exploitation and abuse, it has not fulfilled all of its potential, and as States Members we must do more. In that regard, Uruguay will work actively with the rest of the membership and the Secretariat to unite our efforts in combating this scourge.

Mr. Guimarães (Brazil): Brazil supported the adoption of resolution 71/278, on United Nations action on sexual exploitation and abuse, because we firmly believe that the General Assembly should be at the forefront of United Nations efforts to strengthen the system-wide implementation of the zero-tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and abuse, through prevention, enforcement and remedial action. My delegation is encouraged by the provisions in the resolution that seek to ensure that the zero-tolerance policy is respected equally by all categories of United Nations personnel, as well as those provisions that address the significant gaps regarding sexual exploitation and abuse practiced by non-United Nations forces operating under Security Council authorization.

As a country firmly committed to the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations, however, Brazil regrets that the text of the resolution does not place stronger emphasis on prevention. The fundamental rights and dignity of victims are better respected by creating conditions that help to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse from occurring in the first place. The effective prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse requires more than enhanced predeployment training. It is also necessary to reinforce in-mission training, community outreach, awareness-raising and the vetting of personnel. In our experience, objectively identifying and firmly addressing risk factors has proved essential. Increasing women's participation in preventive strategies is also key. All of those elements should have been addressed in today's resolution.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): The delegation of Ukraine aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Malta on behalf of the European Union. We would also like to make some comments in our national capacity.

At the outset, my delegation welcomes the consensus that members reached today on resolution 71/278, despite the limited time allowed for conducting negotiations. We firmly believe that it is vital to address the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse in a just, effective and timely manner.

As a troop-contributing country, Ukraine reaffirms its determination to strictly implement a zero-tolerance policy where its peacekeepers are concerned. We acknowledge our responsibility to strengthen the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse and create a system of accountability for perpetrators. We also believe that, apart from protecting local populations from sexual exploitation and abuse, it is also particularly important to ensure that United Nations policy in this area is focused on prioritizing the security and well-being of the victims. In that regard, we are pleased that today's resolution focuses on and tackles the issue of victims.

We pay tribute to the Secretary-General's efforts to implement the zero-tolerance policy of the United Nations on sexual exploitation and abuse, and welcome all the activities planned for prevention, enforcement and remedial action, including support to victims. My delegation firmly believes that the resolution will serve as a clear political signal to all parties concerned on the urgent need to implement a more aggressive approach to United Nations policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

Ms. Stener (Norway): Norway welcomes the Assembly's adoption today of resolution 71/278, on sexual exploitation and abuse. From the beginning of the process leading up to the adoption, Norway supported the idea of a strong and comprehensive General Assembly resolution on sexual exploitation and abuse. As we expressed clearly during the negotiations, my delegation would have preferred to see the

timeline extended in order to allow for more thorough deliberations. That would have enabled us to consider the Secretary-General's report (A/71/818) on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, issued yesterday, and would have contributed to a strong, concerted effort to combat this scourge. We also believe that more time would have helped us to agree on a stronger text with a clearer focus on prevention. For that reason, we chose not to be a sponsor of the resolution.

The time has now come to look forward and work together on a basis of the consensus that has been expressed today, and on the basis of the new report of the Secretary-General. Only by standing together and overcoming our differences will we be able to make the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse a reality on the ground, and to uphold the rights and dignity of the most vulnerable people whom the United Nations is mandated to protect.

Mr. Barro (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): My delegation joins in today's consensus adoption of resolution 71/278. We reiterate our support for the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. It is being implemented in various ways, through training and awareness-raising but also by enforcing standards of conduct, conducting investigations and imposing punishment, and by assisting the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations personnel. That is why we continue to believe that, in order to be effective, any resolution on this important issue should be based on a balanced approach that enables us to take due account of the various aspects of the issue. Above all, we believe that a transparent and inclusive negotiation process would have allowed us to dedicate more time and energy to achieving a result.

Mr. Zamora Rivas (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to emphasize the importance that my country, as a Member of the United Nations and a troop-contributing country, attaches to the issue of preventing sexual exploitation and abuse by any troops or personnel of our Organization. El Salvador has consistently spoken out on this issue in the various forums where it has been discussed, but in the framework of the consensus adoption of resolution 71/278, we would like to make the following comments.

First, we were invited to the negotiation process and were able to participate in the discussions. We made some proposals for alternative language, one of which was accepted.

Secondly, looking at the resolution's provisions, we find that it does not contradict what has been agreed on in previous Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and is therefore essentially a reaffirmation of those resolutions. We therefore decided to join the consensus. However, we, too, would like to say that this resolution does not represent any progress on an issue that so urgently needs to be dealt with creatively.

Thirdly, El Salvador attaches importance to the right of any country or group of countries to submit draft resolutions to the General Assembly. This is an inalienable right that is accorded us by the Charter of the United Nations and is one of the democratic foundations of the Organization.

But the fact that this resolution has been adopted in no way, shape or form excludes the possibility of the issue being discussed in the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and in the Fifth and Sixth Committees, which must continue their discussion and carry out an in-depth analysis of the issue. In that connection, the report (A/71/818) of the Secretary-General and other relevant documents that contribute to such analysis, one of which has just been released, take on the utmost importance owing both to their content and proposed actions, as well as the change in the approach to sexual abuse, which is a first in the history of our institution. Such reports must be carefully analysed and supplemented with new proposals to ensure that we can move forward and institutionalize the policy of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, something that we all support.

Fourthly, we wish to express our concern at the fact that the process of consultations on this resolution, on the one hand, was not sufficiently inclusive and transparent, as required by the issue, and, on the other, it received only a very brief time for discussion and consultation. Sexual exploitation and abuse is so complex an issue that the various forms often require weeks of consideration, which makes possible a serious-minded assessment of the issue. For this reason, our delegation decided not to co-sponsor the resolution.

In conclusion, I reiterate that El Salvador is committed to improving the mechanisms for prevention and ensuring accountability in all cases of sexual exploitation and abuse in the United Nations system. We will work hard to help the Organization adopt

decisive measures for the implementation of its zero-tolerance policy.

Finally, I ask that my statement be made part of the records of this meeting.

Mr. Dalo (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina joined the consensus on the adoption of this important resolution — resolution 71/278 — as we fully support the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse and the measures implemented by the Secretary-General to that end.

My country welcomes the comprehensive treatment of this issue by the General Assembly condemning all forms of sexual abuse and exploitation. Nevertheless, we would like briefly to state our agreement in connection with the concerns voiced by other delegations regarding the process used in the adoption of the resolution.

My delegation believes that, in negotiating such an important issue, we should have had enough time for greater consultation with our capitals so as to enable the greater participation of delegations, particularly since there were simultaneous discussions of this issue in the framework of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations.

Moreover, we believe that the report of the Special Committee, as well as the annual report of the Secretary-General on sexual exploitation and abuse and of the task force set up to come up with a strategy for the Organization on this issue, should have served as sufficient relevant inputs for the negotiations without resorting to an artificially adjusted schedule of meetings.

Argentina will continue to support the measures adopted by the United Nations to bolster the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse, with a focus on prevention and assistance to victims, as well as the Organization's consideration of this issue in all its relevant bodies beginning today here at the General Assembly. We hope in future to count on a negotiation process that is more conducive to the quest for consensus on this issue.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote after the voting.

I shall now give the floor to those delegations that wish to make statements following the adoption of the resolution.

Mr. Zhang Dianbin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China congratulates the General Assembly on its adoption by consensus, a short while ago, of resolution 71/278, on sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff. This is the first resolution on the response of the United Nations system to the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse and demonstrates the determination of the membership to combat this scourge. It will also help the United Nations to take more comprehensive measures to deal with this problem, and better help protect the overall reputation of the Organization.

China thanks Egypt for its initiative. We, too, sponsored the resolution and commend the other sponsors for their very positive stance on this issue. Sexual exploitation and abuse is an issue that must be taken very seriously by all departments and agencies of the United Nations system. There is very extensive consensus on this.

United Nations staff, including in the Secretariat, funds and programmes, peacekeepers and the civilian component on the ground have made great contributions to the promotion of world peace and development. Many have lost their lives for the cause. But the negative actions of some have harmed the reputation of the Organization and have compromised the hard-won achievements of United Nations staff.

China firmly supports the fight against acts of sexual exploitation and abuse and supports the zero-tolerance policy adopted by the United Nations system. We welcome the efforts made by Secretary-General Guterres and support the international community's taking of comprehensive measures from the perspective of prevention, accountability, personnel management and protection of victims.

China will continue to work with the wider membership in supporting United Nations management capacity so as to effectively uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and press ahead with the work of the Organization.

Ms. Hailu (Ethiopia): Ethiopia is pleased to co-sponsor resolution 71/278, on United Nations action on sexual exploitation and abuse. We believe that the General Assembly is the appropriate forum for the discussion of this serious issue.

The involvement and active participation of all Member States, including troop-contributing countries,

is indeed critical to finding a comprehensive solution to this scourge, which is tarnishing the image of the United Nations and of the thousands of peacekeepers who continue to risk their lives every single day in the field while executing their mandates on behalf of the international community.

We therefore welcome the adoption of the resolution. We commend Egypt for spearheading the efforts and fully associate ourselves with its statement on behalf of the sponsors. We would like also to express our appreciation to all delegations for their active participation in the negotiation process, as well as for showing flexibility and compromise in order to achieve consensus.

We wish to seize take this opportunity to reiterate our strong condemnation of all acts of sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the United Nations system and to reaffirm our commitment to and support for the implementation of the United Nations zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. We welcome the Secretary-General's commitment to preventing and combating sexual exploitation and abuse and support the measures he is undertaking, including through the appointment of the Special Coordinator and the establishment of a high-level task force to develop a strategy for improving the United Nations response.

As a major troop-contributing country, we deem the protection of civilians, particularly children and women, who usually find themselves in situations of vulnerability, of the utmost importance. We fully recognize our obligation to ensure that our peacekeepers respect applicable international humanitarian and human rights law. We also provide them with the necessary and adequate predeployment training and civilian protection, including on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse.

We are fully aware of our primary obligation to investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, and we have done so whenever we have seen reports of such allegations against our own peacekeepers. However, what we have seen from our own experience is that some of those allegations do not even meet the minimum evidentiary standards. Allegations that are not properly verified and substantiated will not only undermine the credibility of the troop-contributing countries concerned, but also of the United Nations peace operation as a whole. Therefore, we believe that there is an absolute need to handle the matter very carefully. That is why we welcome the adoption of resolution 71/278 today, which underscores the need to ensure accountability, to prevent and combat impunity and to promote credible reporting of allegations with a view to improving the effectiveness of the United Nations in combating sexual exploitation and abuse.

In our view, there is an urgent need to review and standardize procedures for verifying allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse before informing the troop-contributing countries concerned, prior to public reporting — which should uniformly apply to both United Nations personnel and non-United Nations forces operating under a mandate of the Security Council. If, after a proper investigation of allegations, no evidence has been found, all mention of such allegations should be cleared from reports.

Finally, we welcome the Secretary-General's commitment and readiness to engage and consult with member countries and, most important, with troop-contributing countries, in addressing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse. We must recognize that there is indeed a lot of room for improvement in dialogue on that issue. Let me conclude by expressing our sincere hope that the Secretary-General will demonstrate the necessary leadership in mobilizing all Member States towards the common objective of fighting this scourge, which has tarnished the image and reputation of the Organization.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, we would like to express our gratitude to the States that initiated the adoption of today's resolution 71/278, as well as to all delegations that constructively participated in its drafting.

Despite certain positive developments in recent months regarding statistics on sexual offenses committed by the personnel of various United Nations peacekeeping mission units, it is still a pressing issue that irreparably undermines the authority of the United Nations. I believe that the United Nations and its States Members must do everything possible to prevent and fully eradicate such acts.

Equally disturbing is information about egregious cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by military personnel from foreign non-United Nations contingents deployed in conflict areas under a Security Council mandate. The mission of those contingents, like that of the Blue Helmets, is to bring peace and security to countries. Therefore, the same standards of

zero tolerance must be applied to them, regardless of country of origin, identity of the perpetrators or their role in those missions.

Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) has contributed to the discussion of this topic in the United Nations as a whole. However, we maintain that it was adopted by the Council as an exception, given that matters of peacekeeper discipline are not related to the maintenance of international peace and security. Hence, we welcome the resumption of discussions on that issue in the General Assembly, where those matters have been considered for a number of years — both in its Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and in the Fifth and Sixth Committees.

Preventive and precautionary measures have also been included in the resolutions regularly adopted by the General Assembly on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on missions. For instance, the Assembly was actively involved in introducing the practice of predeployment preparation and induction training carried out by States, alongside peacekeeping operations and special political missions. Those measures have yielded concrete results. Indeed, it is the General Assembly that receives the relevant reports of the Secretary-General. We firmly advocate the continuation of that practice, which has proved effective. We believe that it is the involvement of all Member States in developing relevant measures that determines the effectiveness of their practical implementation, and troop-contributing countries should have a particular say in the matter because they possess the full measure of information on why it has so far been impossible to eradicate the phenomenon underlying those deplorable statistics.

Without in any way minimizing the gravity of sexual offenses, we believe that the idea being promoted by a number of States and the Secretariat regarding collective responsibility for such actions is questionable. In our view, the focus should be on good-faith efforts to identify actual perpetrators, establish their guilt and bring them to justice. Another important objective is to adopt measures to prevent such crimes and to properly train and screen uniformed and civilian personnel to be deployed on United Nations missions. The main burden, in the case of troops and police, falls on troop-contributing countries and, in the case of civilian personnel, the responsibility lies with the Secretariat.

Ms. Sayed (Pakistan): We thank you, Sir, for this opportunity to discuss a subject that is of critical importance to us. Today's meeting is part of efforts that began last September to address the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse collectively and holistically, with the aim of finding practical solutions to the problem. We had talked about an overarching General Assembly resolution that would address that issue comprehensively — combining the efforts made in various committees, including the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and the Fifth Committee. Resolution 71/278, adopted today, sends a clear message that we all stand strong to root out this scourge from the United Nations system. It is a reaffirmation of the commitment to a zero-tolerance policy of sexual exploitation and abuse, and to strengthened preventive, reporting, enforcement and remedial action measures.

The resolution that we just adopted, which Pakistan co-sponsored, looks holistically into the issues that need to be addressed in order to implement the zero-tolerance policy. They include strong support and assistance for victims; genuine accountability to be exercised by Member States as it relates to their personnel; the importance of prevention; combating impunity among non-United Nations forces authorized under a Security Council mandate; strengthening and enhancing transparency within the United Nations system; and including the subject on the agenda of the General Assembly for further discussions.

We appreciate the Secretary-General's proactive approach on the issue and his efforts for ensuring greater transparency and accountability. The resolution is also an expression of our support of the Secretary-General's efforts, strengthening his hands for future endeavours in combating the problem. We look forward to working with him and forming a strong partnership between the Member States and the Secretariat.

The principal sponsors of the resolution include major troop- and police-contributing countries. It is also a reaffirmation that we take our responsibilities as a troop contributor very seriously. We fully support the policy of zero-tolerance and strongly believe that protectors of the vulnerable must not be allowed, under any circumstance, to become the abusers. That would be a travesty of justice and morality and, above all, of the sacred covenant that peacekeepers take upon themselves. We cannot allow the exemplary work of thousands of brave men and women to be sullied by the abhorrent acts of a few.

Our sense of urgency on the subject is clearly based on our collective aim to root out a problem that seriously affects the functioning of the United Nations system. We are ready to work with the Secretary-General on the implementation of a system-wide strategy to respond to sexual exploitation and abuse issues. As mentioned in his report (A/71/818), united in common purpose, we can together become a positive force for change.

Mr. Bin Momen (Bangladesh): Bangladesh welcomes the consensus adoption of resolution 71/278, entitled "United Nations Action on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse", and wishes to thank all Member States for their active cooperation and support. We recognize the stewardship role played by the delegation of Egypt.

Bangladesh contributes to United Nations peacekeeping missions to uphold at the international level certain values and principles we cherish as a nation. Allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers and other United Nations personnel run contrary to those values and principles and cannot be tolerated. We therefore fully support the urgency attached to prevention, reporting, enforcement and remedial action in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse by those serving under the banner of the United Nations.

It is only logical that the rights of victims should remain at the core of the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse through the implementation of its zero-tolerance policy. Bangladesh commends the Secretary-General for demonstrating his unstinting commitment to this overarching objective. We take note of his comprehensive report contained in document A/71/818 and feel encouraged at seeing a range of constructive and forward-looking recommendations. We acknowledge the work done by the high-level task force set up by the Secretary-General for this purpose and recognize in particular the seminal contributions of his Special Coordinator, Ms. Jane Holl Lute.

We believe the resolution adopted by the General Assembly today has created an opportunity for inclusive, well-calibrated discussions in the plenary on implementing the recommendations made in the Secretary-General's report in tandem with discussions in the relevant committees. This resolution also coincides with the first anniversary of the adoption of Security Council resolution 2272 (2016) and brings to closure a proposal put forward by a group of troop- and police-contributing countries at the General Assembly meeting held on 7 September 2016 (see A/70/PV.115). We consider today's resolution to be a work in progress and look forward to further enhancing its contents in the coming years.

Bangladesh joins others in underscoring the need for addressing sexual exploitation and abuse in a decisive and sustained manner through a United Nations system-wide approach. The various layers of screening, oversight, monitoring, reporting, investigation and accountability being introduced throughout the United Nations system should help further strengthen the firewall against such aberrations. Disciplinary and criminal justice measures, in line with corresponding national laws and systems, need to be enforced and reported on with due diligence. Remedial action in support of victims in case of credible allegations is a non-derogable responsibility. The potentials of the trust fund set up for victims must be optimized in a fair and transparent manner.

In his latest report, the Secretary-General identifies some of the best practices from Bangladesh in conformity with our zero-tolerance policy with respect to sexual exploitation and abuse. The trust, confidence and respect that our peacekeepers have earned over the decades cannot be compromised by the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse, for those hosting our peacekeepers must not experience any erosion of faith in those they have turned to for protection. The image, credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations must be preserved and given primacy over any vested interest or short-term gains.

We have shared with the United Nations our readiness to further expand the possible areas of cooperation and engagement in case of any allegation. We remain firm in our resolve to arrive at and maintain zero allegations and combat impunity to uphold the ethos that underpins our participation in United Nations peacekeeping operations. We are hopeful that, through a game-changing approach by the United Nations and its States Members, sexual exploitation and abuse will be effectively addressed across the system.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 123.

The meeting rose at 4.15 p.m.

United Nations A/71/PV.72

General Assembly

Official Records

Seventy-first session

72nd plenary meeting
Tuesday, 21 March 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Tribute to the memory of His Excellency Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations

The President: Before we proceed to the item on our agenda, it is my sad duty to pay tribute to the memory of the late Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, His Excellency Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, who passed away on Monday, 20 February 2017. I am joined for the tribute this morning by members of his bereaved family, Mrs. Irina Churkin, wife of the late Ambassador, and Mr. Maksim Churkin, their son. On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to extend to them our heartfelt condolences. Before proceeding further, I would like to make my own tribute to the memory of the late Ambassador.

Ambassador Churkin was a dear friend and colleague, and his tragic passing — just one day shy of his sixty-fifth birthday — shocked and saddened us all. In the annals of history of the United Nations, Ambassador Churkin's name will be indelible. His decade of wise leadership while serving as the representative of the Russian Federation on the Security Council will suffice to ensure that legacy. But it will be the late Ambassador's character that will surely be the most beloved element of institutional memory of this remarkable man. The outpouring of heartfelt tributes from colleagues from all corners of the world reflects the esteem in which Ambassador Churkin was held. To put it simply, in the theatre of diplomacy, Ambassador Churkin was a giant, a deep and eloquent intellectual with a sharp wit and a disarmingly approachable manner. He served his country with passion and pride. As the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the United Nations for more than a decade, he became the longest-serving member of the Security Council. Ambassador Churkin's quick intelligence was admired by all, his grasp of the intricacies of international political affairs undisputed. His mastery of negotiation and due process commanded respect from all quarters. But it is the passing of the man himself that we mourn — the loss of his dry wit, his knowing looks, eye to eye, his smiling dismissal of nonsense, and his wide cultural reach into literature, theatre and film. For all this and so much more that Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin shared with his colleagues, we are so grateful, even as we stand diminished by his passing.

Over a long and illustrious career, Ambassador Churkin made an outstanding contribution to the work of the United Nations. And while acknowledging the myriad challenges the Organization has faced, he believed "the United Nations continues to be an indispensable mechanism". On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to express our most sincere condolences to Mrs. Irina Churkina, to their children, Anastasia and Maksim, to the staff of the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, and to the people and the Government of the Russian Federation.

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I now invite representatives to stand and observe a minute of silence in tribute to the memory of His Excellency Ambassador Vitaly Churkin.

The members of the General Assembly observed a minute of silence.

The President: I now give the floor to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, His Excellency Mr. António Guterres.

The Secretary-General: It is with deep sadness that I join the General Assembly to pay tribute to our friend and colleague Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin, who was tragically and suddenly taken from us last month on the eve of his sixty-fifth birthday. Throughout his decade-long tenure as the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, Ambassador Churkin was a unique and visible presence. His was an unmistakeable voice. Witty, he was also passionate in defending Russian interests while advocating for a strong United Nations. He was truly and simultaneously a patriot and an internationalist. Ambassador Churkin was truly one of a kind: an outstanding diplomat, a man, of many talents and interests and a human being whose friendship touched many of us here in the Hall today.

He constantly tried to reach out to other people, regardless of political affiliations, nationality or position. He made himself accessible to the press even at times when others dodged reporters' questions. From his beginnings as an interpreter, he went on to become one of Russia's most able diplomats and one of the United Nations community's most renowned actors, greatly respected and admired by all his colleagues.

I came to know Ambassador Churkin only recently. But even in a short time I quickly recognized his formidable diplomatic skills. I remember witnessing some of his most brilliant moments, which friends will recognize as "vintage Churkin". It was he who last October, during the Russian presidency of the Security Council, announced to the world that the Council had decided to recommend me to the General Assembly to serve as Secretary-General. That is something I will never forget.

I wish to once again express my deepest condolences to his widow, Irina, to his son, Maksim, to the rest of his family, to all his friends and colleagues in the Russian Mission in New York and in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and to the Government and the people of Russia. I trust that all colleagues at the Russian Mission in New York and in the Russian Foreign Ministry will continue to build on his legacy and support the global mission of the United Nations to safeguard peace, sustainable development and human rights for all.

In conclusion, allow me to offer a few words in probably not-very-correct Russian:

(*spoke in Russian*)

May you rest in peace, may the earth be a soft bed for you.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

I now give the floor to the representative of Cabo Verde, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Fialho Rocha (Cabo Verde): In my capacity as the Chair of the Group of African States for the month of March 2017, I wish to thank the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Mr. Peter Thomson, for convening today's formal meeting in honour of our late colleague Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, whose untimely demise shocked us all.

As has been widely said, our dear colleague Ambassador Churkin was greatly admired and represented his country with steadfast dedication as the longest-serving Permanent Representative at the Security Council. Indeed, Ambassador Churkin's colleagues, surprised by his unexpected passing, literally assaulted social networks to bear witness to their sympathy for who he was — the fine man and colleague, the friend, the able and experienced professional, the titan, the tremendous and respected diplomat, the supporter of peace and multilateralism. He was also remembered for his courage and example. Furthermore, they highlighted the emptiness left by him and his skilled action in the Security Council, while several meetings were interrupted or began with a moment of silence in his honour. At the same time, memorial books were signed and condolences were addressed to his widow and family, to his colleagues at the Mission and to the Government of Russia.

At this particular moment, in which the United Nations family is gathered to pay tribute to one of its former members, it is through my voice that the African Group reiterates its deepest sympathy to Ambassador Churkin's family and to the Government and the people

of Russia for their loss. May the soul of our departed colleague rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia, who will speak on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group of States.

Mr. Mayong Onon (Malaysia): On behalf of my Permanent Representative, who is on an official trip to Geneva, I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 54 States members of the Group of Asia-Pacific States, of which Malaysia is Chair for the month of March 2017.

We are gathered here today to pay tribute to Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, late Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, who left us 21 February 2017. The late Ambassador Churkin was the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation for almost 11 years, a towering figure in multilateral forums who represented Russia at the United Nations. His knowledge, experience and skills were well respected by colleagues and friends. He was a man of outstanding intellectual capability, an excellent diplomat with exceptional leadership qualities. He was also full of wisdom, from which his country benefited immensely at the United Nations over the past decade.

Ambassador Churkin's work at the United Nations was exemplary. Even on issues where positions were miles apart and consensus seemed impossible, Ambassador Churkin was known among colleagues as always wanting to engage in dialogue, which is the reflection of a genuine diplomat. He left a huge imprint and was a major driver of the United Nations contribution to the international community, especially on international peace and security issues, when he was President of the Security Council on numerous occasions.

We acknowledge the presence here today of Mrs. Irina Churkina and Mr. Maksim Churkin, and recognize Ms. Anastasia Churkina, who could not be with us today, and express our deep and heartfelt condolences to them and their entire family.

On behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, I would also extend our most sincere condolences to the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations and to the Government and the people of the Russian Federation as we join in mourning the passing of a man who devoted his life to defending his country. Indeed, he was an inspiration to all of us working at the United Nations.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Moldova, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Lupan (Republic of Moldova): On behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, I would like to extend our deepest condolences on the passing of our colleague His Excellency Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, and to convey our sympathy to his family and colleagues, as well as to the Government of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Churkin had an outstanding career. After graduating from the Moscow State Institute of International Relations 43 years ago, he devoted his entire life to the diplomatic service, serving in various positions in the Russian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, where he headed the Information Department at the beginning of the 1990s and later was appointed as Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. He held a number of ambassadorial posts, such as those in Belgium and Canada, and as Ambassador-at-Large at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Russia.

For his work in those postings, he was awarded with the Order of Honour, the Order "For Merit to the Fatherland" and the Order of Alexander Nevsky. Since 2006, Ambassador Churkin dedicated almost 11 years of his professional life to one of the most challenging posts in the diplomatic field, that of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. Ambassador Churkin was one of the most visible and competent advocates for his country. His strong personality gave him an opportunity to be a prominent presence in the discussions in the Security Council and in other forums addressing the wider United Nations agenda.

Mr. Churkin had a precise command of United Nations-related issues and played a leading role in promoting his country's priorities in the Organization. His rich experience was easily apparent in discussions on a variety of critical topics here at the United Nations. In an Organization of many different cultures, his statements and approaches were uncommon yet powerful. Even when his point of view was not necessarily shared by others, it was listened to with great attention. As a brilliant diplomat, Ambassador Churkin was indeed a fierce advocate for his country and an extraordinary individual with an extraordinary task. He had a unique personality with a lively spirit

and a sharp sense of humour; he was a good colleague and a loving husband.

The news of someone's death is always saddening. But when it happens to one of our colleagues, someone we worked with so closely, it is even sadder and more shocking. Being dedicated to our jobs at the United Nations means working hard, finding new ideas where there are few convergent points of view, protecting our countries' interests and often spending sleepless nights in negotiations and diplomatic debates. We face new days with hope and concern as we confront an array of challenges. And one of those uneasy beginnings to a day was, unfortunately, the last morning for our colleague Ambassador Vitaly Churkin.

Vitaly Churkin will remain in the memory of many of us present today in this Hall as a diplomat dedicated to his country's interests in this global forum, a professional who spent his time on the job until his last moments. He passed away, leaving his friends and family, only one day before his sixty-fifth birthday. They will always remember him as a loving husband and father who cared for his family with great affection. His country awarded Ambassador Churkin the Order of Courage for the service, dedication, perseverance and great professionalism he showed in his post as Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations. His Minister said that the most important thing for a diplomat is the ability to advocate for the interests of a country without falling into unbridled confrontation and while seeking possible ways to join efforts based on a balance of interests — and that the best way we can pay our respects to our friend is to continue to work on creating the basis for a calmer, safer, more democratic world. We could not agree more with that remembrance.

As we pursue peace in advancing the agenda of the United Nations, may we also follow the path that seeks consensus and understanding, and in that way show members' respect for a dedicated diplomat and strong personality who served his country's interests at the United Nations in the most unwavering way. May he rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the privilege of taking the floor on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States to honour the memory of the late Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, our friend Ambassador Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin. He leaves a rich legacy on how to conduct oneself in international relations. We should not be sad at his death, because we know that his spirit is now at peace. While he was among us, he taught us, he made us reflect and he helped us to see some issues from a different point of view.

I met Vitaly 20 years ago, when we both Heads of Mission in Canada at a more peaceful time in the world, and we shared happy moments ice-skating at the home of Canada's Governor-General. In 2006, Vitaly and I found ourselves coinciding once again in this Organization, and in spite of his many responsibilities, he was always willing to give any colleague the benefit of his time and his enormous insight. This great diplomat's personality and talent certainly distinguished him far beyond his official duties; not only was he friendly and genuinely attentive to all, he was also familiar with history and the conditions that created it, knowledge that enabled him to serve his country's interests to the full. And that is why we feel so deeply the irreparable loss of a generous personality, an enlightened talent and an incomparably sardonic sense of humour.

We cannot say that we can fully comprehend the overwhelming pain that his family, his close friends and the Russian people are feeling. But we nevertheless want to offer them our comfort and affection and to voice our respect and admiration for a man who in life was a worthy representative of his country. Remembering the dedication that our friend Vitaly showed every day at every meeting and session where we were together is to recognize a masterly and distinguished diplomat. Vitaly was one of a kind, an avid listener to positions and arguments with a knowledge of the background to every debate, a tireless defender of his country's interests, an agile negotiator and, above all, a human being who was always accessible and correct in his dealings despite any differences. Vitaly embodied the essence of the conduct of modern diplomacy.

Although he has departed from us, this Organization must keep his memory intact and at this time, as with many of the vicissitudes that the United Nations has to face, we must remember his life, keeping alive the spirit and energy that characterized him so that we can strive to emulate his decisiveness and courage. On this unhappy occasion we offer our heartfelt condolences and sincere regrets to his sorrowing wife and children and to his country. His absence must become our strength,

and by our acts we must show that his presence in this Organization and in our lives was greatly valued and for which we will always give thanks and remember. Rest in peace, Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): It was with great dismay and sadness that we received the news of the sudden death of the Ambassador of the Russian Federation, Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin. Ambassador Churkin was a landmark figure at the United Nations. His long tenure as Permanent Representative of Russia, his profound knowledge of complex United Nations dossiers and processes and his sharp intellect and dry wit made him an outstanding diplomat and a very effective representative of his country.

One of Ambassador Churkin's core strengths was his ability to connect with his counterparts on a personal level. However heated the debate in some formal settings might become, afterwards he always reached out to those with whom he disagreed. Vitaly Churkin never forgot there is a difference between official positions and talking points and the private person behind the statements. Diplomacy is defined and driven to a large extent by the interaction between people, and Ambassador Churkin understood and respected that idea very well.

Since 2006, when he took up his post, Ambassador Churkin's 11-year contribution has left an indelible mark on the Security Council and its work. He was a staunch, loyal defender of his country's foreign policy, and his firm and vocal stance on many of the issues negotiated by the Security Council and General Assembly was a source of admiration and, at times, of frustration to other members. In the world of diplomacy there is no greater compliment than to be respected by those with whom one disagrees. Ambassador Churkin earned this respect from everyone, regardless of policy or political differences. Members of the Western European and other States Group will remember Vitaly Churkin for his skilful diplomacy, distinctive voice on the Security Council and formidable personal charm.

We would like to convey our sincere condolences to Mrs. Irina Churkina, their children and our colleagues at the Russian mission, as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Moscow.

The sudden death of our colleague on the eve of his birthday — cutting short a life still full of plans and projects — will leave a huge gap on the Security Council, in the General Assembly and in the wider community of Permanent Representatives. May he rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Matthew Rycroft, President of the Security Council for the month of March.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom), President of the Security Council: On behalf of the members of the Security Council, I would like to express my heartfelt condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. It has been exactly one month since the first Security Council meeting without Ambassador Churkin. Members of the Council are still shocked and saddened by his sudden passing. His absence is still felt by all of us around the Council table.

Ambassador Churkin was an exceptional diplomat who served his country with integrity, skill and dedication for over 40 years. Before coming to New York, he represented Russia with distinction in Washington, D.C., Brussels and Ottawa, as well as at the Foreign Ministry in Moscow. During the more than 10 years when he served as Russian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, the Security Council was often divided. It is in such a divided environment that a diplomat's skills are put to the test. Ambassador Churkin defended the Russian position with passion, intelligence and humour. He was a master of his briefings and a tough negotiator, and his knowledge of the Security Council's workings was the envy of his peers.

Vitaly was a true professional who treated his colleagues with respect and who enjoyed the respect of everyone in the Council Chamber in return. Outside the Council, all who knew him will remember his warmth, kindness and sense of humour. His death has deprived us all of a brilliant diplomat, but also of a trusted colleague and friend. May he rest in peace.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): On behalf of the United States as host country, I want to convey our most sincere condolences to Mrs. Irina Churkina and the Churkin family on the untimely passing of

Ambassador Vitaly Churkin. We also extend our deep sympathy to our colleagues at the Russian Mission on the loss of one of their nation's greatest diplomats.

As the Secretary-General noted, Vitaly Churkin was truly one of a kind. He was an ever-eloquent voice at the United Nations and a consummate diplomat throughout his long career. We will remember him for his brilliance, his wisdom and sharp sense of humour. Vitaly Churkin was a steadfast advocate for his country's policies and was devoted to making the personal connections that make diplomacy work. While we did not always see things the same way, Ambassador Churkin had an eye for identifying compromise and recognized the value of stronger relations between our two countries.

The United Nations community has experienced a shock and a loss, and we miss Vitaly's presence here. Russian playwright Anton Chekhov wrote that knowledge is of no value unless you put it into practice. Our late colleague Vitaly Churkin always put his knowledge into practice. Again, our thoughts and prayers remain with the Churkin family, our colleagues at the Russian Mission and the people of the Russian Federation.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Russian Federation.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): First and foremost, I would like to thank you, Mr. President, as well as the Secretary-General, the President of the Security Council, the Chairs of the regional groups and the representatives of the host country for their sincere and heartfelt expressions of condolences to the family of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation, Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin, and to the Russian delegation at the United Nations.

From the moment of his untimely death, we have continued to receive expressions of condolences. We cannot count all of the telephone calls and messages that our colleagues have received. The book of condolences opened in connection with this tragic event at the Permanent Representation now runs to four volumes. We are deeply thankful to all of those who grieve with us and who have found a way, somehow, to convey their sympathy and pay tribute to the memory of Vitaly Ivanovich Churkin.

These days are of course most difficult for his family and loved ones. We would like to once again express our sincere condolences and sympathy to the family of Ambassador Churkin, to his wife, Irina Yevgenieva, his son, Maksim, and his daughter, Anastasia. They have lost a loving husband and a caring father. Those of us who were lucky enough to see him with his family know how he literally transformed and how a spark of joy appeared in his eyes. His family was a source of strength for him. Probably all diplomats in all countries understand how important that is. I assure his family that, in this time of tribulation, it can count on our support and assistance. We hope that the compassion of all of those who loved, respected and esteemed Vitaly Ivanovich might, in some small way, ease the pain of his irreplaceable loss.

The news of Ambassador Churkin's death shook Russia. It is difficult to remember a similar event. Thousands upon thousands of people who never knew him personally showed sincere grief over his sudden death, at work. His passing was a very difficult and irreplaceable loss for Russian foreign policy. He was a professional of the highest order who had a unique intellect and incisiveness. He also had incredible charm and a great sense of humour. He was endlessly bright, subtle and, at the same time, a surprisingly powerful person.

The achievements of Ambassador Churkin are difficult to overstate. They were celebrated with a number of high State awards. Repeatedly, he was accorded high office within the Russian Foreign Service, at times, and in its most difficult and important spheres. These were many and varied. They included Press Secretary of the Soviet Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Special Representative of the Russian President on the Balkan settlement, as an Ambassador with a special remit to develop cooperation in the Arctic, as well as important diplomatic posts in a range of countries in Europe and America. He always reached the maximum possible achievements, writing a number of important pages in the history of the Russian Federation's foreign policy. He set himself apart with his sharp wit, intelligence, deep knowledge and an unconventional view of problems. At all stages of his journey, he was a true leader and an example for all of those who had the fortune to work together with him.

The talent of Ambassador Churkin shone brightest in his last working post, as the Permanent Representative to the United Nations. The President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, noted that,

> "for more than 10 years, he firmly and consistently defended Russian interests on the most important issues on the international agenda, which required incredible effort and total dedication."

It was possible not to agree with him, but it was impossible not to pay tribute to his diplomatic talent, his professionalism and his charisma. Despite all difficulties, he solved the problems that he faced brilliantly. When answering questions on the lack of effectiveness of the United Nations, Vitaly Ivanovich repeatedly referred to the formula according to which the United Nations simply cannot be much better than the world in which we live. He genuinely strived to ensure that our world became better and saw in the United Nations a key instrument for joint work towards the achievement of that goal.

Vitaly Ivanovich will be remembered at the United Nations for many achievements and, as Mr. Guterres just mentioned, what many will probably remember are the events of October 2016, when he stood with the Permanent Representatives of the States of the Security Council and, with clear enthusiasm, announced the decision taken by the Council on the issue of the candidacy of the new Secretary-General. At that time, Russia held the presidency of the Security Council, and Vitaly Ivanovich played a particular role at a turning point in the life of the Organization. That was one of the moments of genuine unity among the members of the Council. He always advocated strengthening that unity, however difficult the process of overcoming discord might have been.

Ambassador Churkin believed in the United Nations, and this full General Assembly Hall today is the best possible demonstration of the fact that his daily tireless work to strengthen the authority and influence of the Organization around the world will be remembered for a long time, not only within these walls, which became so dear to him, but also far beyond them, and probably in each of the States Members of the United Nations, whose representatives worked with this remarkable Russian diplomat who was an exceptional person with a bright personality. May he rest in peace.

The President: I shall now suspend the meeting to allow the Secretary-General and myself to bid farewell to Ambassador Churkin's family.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11 a.m.

Agenda item 138 (*continued*)

Scale of assessments for the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations (A/71/764/Add.5)

The President: In keeping with established practice, I would like to draw the attention of the General Assembly to document A/71/764/Add.5, in which the Secretary-General informs the President of the General Assembly that, since the issuance of his communication contained in document A/71/764/Add.4, Vanuatu has made the payment necessary to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter of the United Nations.

May I take it that the General Assembly duly takes note of the information contained in document A/71/764/Add.5?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 66 (*continued*)

Elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

The President: The General Assembly will now resume its consideration of agenda item 66 in order to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and to hold a debate on racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration, in accordance with paragraph 27 of resolution 71/181, of 19 December 2016.

I will now read out a statement on the subject of racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration.

We meet today, 21 March, to observe for the fiftieth time the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. It is an occasion for us all to reflect on the mistakes of our past and to renew our determination to not let them be repeated. When the General Assembly first proclaimed 21 March as International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, it was under the determined leadership of South Africa to never let the injustices of apartheid be forgotten. That date was selected to memorialize the 69 unarmed people killed by police during a peaceful demonstration against apartheid-era policies in Sharpeville, South Africa.

On this occasion, on behalf of the General Assembly, I commend South Africa for its global leadership in the fight against racism. In particular, I thank Her Excellency Ms. Susan Shabangu, Minister of Women in the Presidency of South Africa, and His Excellency Mr. Guillaume Long, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Human Mobility of Ecuador, who will address the General Assembly later today.

As we look around our world, it is challenging to us all to see just how far we are from winning the global fight against racism, xenophobia and related intolerance. Despite global migration long being a feature of human history, and in spite of the exigencies of forcible displacement having driven large numbers of people from their homes, refugees and migrants are too often being received these days in conditions of suspicion, fear and intolerance. At a time when the world needs to call on its reserves of empathy and common humanity as we respond to the largest humanitarian and refugee crisis since the Second World War, we are instead too often witnessing hate crimes against immigrant asylum-seekers, attacks against places of worship and threats directly targeting migrants and minority groups. In such circumstances, we must reaffirm our faith in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, more than 50 years after its adoption by the General Assembly, along with our commitment to the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

In these challenging times, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights calls on us to stand up against racism, xenophobia and hate, wherever we encounter them. People of conscience should stand up for pluralism and cross-cultural understanding whenever the opportunity allows. Across the globe, it is incumbent upon political leaders to role-model tolerant and respectful attitudes towards migrants. We need to promote cross-cultural education in our schools to foster respect for diversity and understanding of the positive contribution refugees and migrants make to our societies and economies. Most critically of all, we need to fully support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, secure a safer, more sustainable and prosperous future for all — one which will relieve many of the root causes driving people from their homes. That includes by eliminating extreme poverty and building peaceful and inclusive societies, increasing prosperity, reducing inequality, improving access to education, combating climate change and protecting our natural environment. Finally, we must use the historic opportunity of the forthcoming negotiations on a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration to affirm universal respect for the rights of migrants.

I will conclude with a quotation from South Africa's most famous son, Nelson Mandela, who once memorably said,

> "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background or his religion. People must learn to hate, and, if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: As the President of the General Assembly just mentioned, today reminds us that in 1960 in Sharpeville, South Africa, 69 unarmed protesters were killed during a peaceful protest against discriminatory laws passed by the racist apartheid regime. I join my voice to his in praising South Africa's leadership in our common struggle against racial discrimination. Yet, as we scan the global landscape 57 years later, it seems that we are living in an increasingly intolerant and even more divided world.

Discrimination and violence are on the rise. People are targeted because of their race, nationality, ethnicity, religion or sexual orientation. Moreover, borders are being closed, and the international refugee regime is being undermined. In a time of upheaval and change, it is easy to paint vulnerable communities as the cause of the problems. Migrants have become convenient scapegoats, while xenophobia has become widespread. Women and girls of minority communities are often targeted. Many minorities experience racial profiling by authorities. Far too often, hate speech, stereotyping and stigmatization have become normalized. Fringe figures have moved to centre stage in many political systems.

Despite that dark picture, there are many rays of hope. Millions of people are speaking up against racism and intolerance. Many communities have opened their hearts and doors to refugees and migrants while recognizing and appreciating migration as part of the solution of our global problems.

Today marks the day to build upon that progress, do even more, work even harder, close divisions, combat intolerance and protect the human rights of all. Today

is also a reminder of all our common obligations. International law requires States to take effective actions to prevent and eliminate discrimination on all grounds and in all areas of civil, economic, political, social and cultural life. They must be vigilant and respond immediately and appropriately, including by prohibiting incitement to racial, national and religious hatred and ending racial profiling. They must uphold the integrity of the international refugee protection regime.

Politicians and leaders must speak up and counter hateful speech, and everyone of us needs to stand up for human rights. I applaud civil-society organizations around the world for reminding us that we need to do better and more. We all have a role to play. The International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination highlights our collective responsibility. After all, racial discrimination destabilizes societies, undermines democracies and erodes the legitimacy of Governments.

By acting together to end discrimination, we can lift humankind as a whole. As societies become multi-ethnic, multireligious and multicultural, we need greater political, cultural and economic investments in inclusivity and cohesion in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. We can build communities that recognize that diversity is not a source of weakness. It is a source of strength and richness.

Let us therefore stand up against intolerance and eliminate discrimination. Let us join forces together in our global campaign for respect, safety and dignity for all.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General for his statement.

Members will recall that, in resolution 71/181, the General Assembly decided that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights would participate in this commemorative meeting. I understand that, owing to his participation at a similar meeting in the framework of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Mr. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, is unable to be here with us today. His statement is now being circulated desk-to-desk.

Before proceeding further, I should now like to consult members with a view to inviting the following speakers to make statements on this occasion, in accordance with paragraph 27 of resolution 71/181, and as mentioned in my letter dated 15 March: Ms. Louise Arbour, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration; Ms. Anastasia Crickley, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and Mr. Mutuma Ruteere, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite those speakers to make statements at this commemorative meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Ms. Louise Arbour, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration.

Ms. Arbour: It is a great honour for me to be with everyone today as I begin my mandate as Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration and participate in this commemorative plenary meeting of the General Assembly to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and address the theme of racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration. In fact, the theme of this commemorative event could not be more timely, as the General Assembly recently adopted by consensus the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) in September 2016, and has embarked on developing a global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration that will, among other issues, look at combating racism, xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance towards all migrants.

With an estimated 244 million international migrants today, which is an increase from the 175 million reported in the year 2000, which is expected only to rise, the global compact can be a significant advancement not only in how we perceive and treat migrants, but also in how societies can embrace diversity. But, although the international community took that historic step at last September's summit, we are witnessing significant and widespread hostility towards migrants in many countries. Manifestations of racial discrimination and xenophobia towards migrants have unfortunately kept pace with increased human mobility Even in countries that in the past had taken pride in welcoming migrants, we hear strident voices of apprehension with regard to migrants arriving at their borders today. The reality is

that no country can claim to be free from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia or intolerance.

When the discourse on migration policy reverts to feverish debates that demonize migrants as burdens to society or perpetuate inaccuracies, the factual and overwhelming positive contributions that migrants make to our societies and economies are overshadowed and risk being forgotten altogether. Often, those politically charged debates are accompanied by political calls to restrict or halt migration entirely, as well as heightened negativity in the media. Sometimes they can also spill into acts of violence and intimidation against minority groups. Migration debates in many parts of the world have created a climate in which it is all too easy to see migrants as directly or indirectly responsible for unemployment, security issues or the lack of social cohesion, among many other negative issues, but we know that those types of issues are rooted in much more complex processes of change. Migrants simply become the scapegoat for the very effects of those processes.

In order to address misconceptions about migration and the discriminatory xenophobic intolerant views that those misconceptions foster, we need to create a more open, balanced and comprehensive discourse on migration — one that moves away from migrants being seen as a burden or a threat towards one that recognizes and embraces human mobility and diversity as a contribution to vibrant societies and strong economies. We must work towards social inclusion to foster a two-way exchange that allows both migrants and host communities to thrive and to transform collectively.

Migrants are the bridges between countries of origin, transit and destination. They are the spark that ignites new ideas and new thinking, fosters innovation and propels societies forward rather than backward. They bring with them their entrepreneurial skills to contribute to their new countries, while also contributing to their countries of origin through their remittances, which in 2015 alone exceeded $601 billion.

As more and more people are on the move, more cultures become intertwined and societies become more diverse. As pluralistic societies are more likely to be the norm rather than the exception, one of our most important challenges is to help appreciate and manage this growing social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. In that regard, I am especially proud to be working closely with the Secretary-General to support the "Together Campaign", which Member States also committed to supporting in the New York Declaration. The campaign starts a new dialogue about refugees and migrants, one that highlights the economic, cultural and social contributions of migrants to foster social cohesion while countering the negative stereotyping and falsehoods about migrants. I believe that one of the most important elements of the Together Campaign is that it puts the responsibility on each one of us — the United Nations, Governments, the private sector, the media, academia, civil society and migrants themselves — to play a role to encourage a discourse based on facts and a dialogue that embraces diversity. It builds from the local level up through the engagement of individuals, communities, cities and countries seeking to change the discourse and promote our common values of tolerance and respect for human dignity.

In conclusion, while we collectively work towards the development of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, let us ensure that it focuses on the ways in which we can work together to eliminate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance towards migrants. To do so, it is essential that we improve the public perception of migrants based on factual information about the positive contributions of migrants.

As I embark upon my new role, I wholeheartedly embrace and pledge to advance our collective efforts to shift the narrative and to promote a global community where migrants and all people are free from discrimination.

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Ms. Anastasia Crickley, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Ms. Crickley: First, let me, on behalf of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), thank the General Assembly for the honour and opportunity to be here with delegations to share my thoughts on this historic day.

The horrific events of 21 March 1960, known as the Sharpeville massacre, sparked outrage worldwide and became the turning point in the fight against apartheid. It is now, as we know, commemorated around the world as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Five years later, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

was adopted at Headquarters by the General Assembly. Today, more than 50 years since then, we can acknowledge that progress has been made to end racism and its consequences for women, men and children globally. On behalf of the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, I wish to acknowledge the commitments by States and the work by people everywhere that created the conditions that made that progress possible. I also applaud the continued courage and courageous efforts of civil society globally to ensure that that progress continues.

However, as the Committee's work indicates, racial discrimination remains a very current concern in every country of the world. Legacies of early forms of racism and slavery and colonialism remain intact and evident in discrimination against people of African descent, indigenous peoples and a number of other groups globally. Racial discrimination, whether by intent or in effect — either or both can apply — and as the definition the Assembly wisely adopted in article 1 of the Convention states, remains an insidious phenomenon visible not least in racial profiling and the incitement to hatred. These are frequently targeted at migrants and refugees, but let us be clear at the outset that whoever they target, racial profiling is, and can easily be shown to be, an expensive and ineffective attempt at justice or the protection of national security, and incitement oftentimes dehumanizes our fellow human beings in ways that have had dreadful and well documented consequences for whole populations and peoples.

Again, as is well researched and documented, let us remember also to paraphrase the Committee's statement for the United Nations Summit for Refugees and Migrants, which took place on 19 September 2016 at Headquarters, migrants and refugees make positive and essential contributions to societies and communities, and the adoption of measures based on principles of non-discrimination, equality and justice are essential in creating stable and peaceful societies that will reap positive results for humankind as a whole.

However, in the shadow of persistent efforts to stigmatize and divide, often repeated carelessly by leaders in multimedia formats in their own short-term interests, the Assembly's focus today on racial profiling and incitement, including in the context of migration, is an important recognition of these great instances of discrimination, including at institutional levels. CERD shares the Assembly's concern and the current urgency to articulate and address them.

Racial profiling and incitement to hatred are addressed in virtually all of CERD's concluding observations to States under review. Those observations are grounded in the Convention, which by now 178 countries have ratified and agreed to implement its provisions, and they are informed by the Committee's general recommendations, which articulate and explain them. In effect, the international community already has at its disposal, through those and other human rights provisions, at both the global and regional levels, guidance and pointers on identifying, addressing and eliminating profiling and incitement.

For example, racial profiling is a particular focus of the Committee's general recommendation No. 31, on the prevention of racial discrimination in the administration and functioning of the criminal justice system. Additionally, general recommendation No. 30, on discrimination against non-citizens, calls on States to ensure that counter-terrorism measures do not discriminate in purpose or effect. They are recommended to take resolute action to counter any tendency to target, stigmatize, stereotype or profile on the basis of race, colour, descent and national or ethnic origin members of non-citizen population groups, especially by politicians, officials, educators, the media or on the Internet and other electronic forms of communication networks and in society at large.

We also point to the need for action on measures, not just in national policy and legislation, but at all levels and addressed to all elements in the State administration. Those concerns are echoed by the Human Rights Committee, and they form an important part of the work of the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and are evident in his recommendations. My colleague will, of course, address the Assembly later.

Turning now to incitement, hatred and racist hate speech, the Committee's general recommendation No. 35 takes into consideration article 4 of the Convention, which obliges States to take immediate and positive measures to eradicate incitement and racial discrimination. CERD is clear, and states this in its recommendation that the criminalization of racist expression be reserved for the most serious of cases and should take into account, for example, the content and form of the speech, the economic, social and cultural climate, the status of the speaker, as well as the reach and objectives of the speech. Addressing the root causes

of racist hate speech requires a number of initiatives, including in the education, cultural and information arenas. I would also add that it requires clear leadership from those whose positions call for it, not to mention a little of the courage of those I have mentioned and who have struggled against racism in so many countries over the years.

The context of migration — as the previous speaker pointed out — is a current and very complex one within which to address the issues of racism in every country, whether we describe those countries as sending, transit or, in particular, so-called destination countries. These challenges are also addressed in the Committee's concluding observations. We call on countries that have not done so to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and other relevant commitments, including those of the International Labour Organization.

In the New York Declaration, which was already mentioned, Member States made a wealth of commendable and concrete commitments to human rights issues related to migration, including to protect the rights of all refugees and migrants as rights-holders, regardless of their status. In a statement that was also reflective of the concerns of other treaty bodies and human rights mechanisms, CERD appealed to Member States and intergovernmental organizations to ensure that solutions aimed at addressing large movements of refugees and migrants be grounded in, and guided by, existing international human rights norms and standards, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and that they be informed by the principles and guidance developed by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. This human rights framework, which already forms part of the commitments made by States here, is very important for the success of the compact now being developed. It is a necessary prerequisite for addressing all human rights matters, including racism in the migration field. In that regard, I acknowledge the upcoming human rights consultation by the co-facilitators of the compact, which includes a focus on racism, xenophobia and intolerance.

The pernicious institutionalized issues we address and discuss today will not be conclusively addressed by a simple one-size-fits-all approach. For example, as the work of CERD indicates, women who experience racial discrimination experience a gendered form of this human rights denial, encompassing an intersectionality between the oppression of women and racism. This is no less true for racial profiling and racial hatred towards women in the context of migration, as the important work undertaken by UN-Women and others demonstrates. How are women's human rights to be considered at each stage of the migration process, and what about appropriate services and measures to address sexual and gender-based violence and women's rights?

Children's rights to freedom from racism also need a particular and specific treatment and focus. Simple division into the categories of the deserving and undeserving, reminiscent of nineteenth-century ideals, will not work either. All women, men and children in today's mixed and changing movements of migrants deserve our consideration. The dominant public discourse on migrants, which relies on myths and prejudice, ignores both rights and realities. Few, if any, make their journeys lightly. The vast majority make them out of a real fear for their lives if they were to stay, or for potential economic possibilities — as indeed did many people from my own country in centuries past. Most people who move stay within their own country or within their own region. Also, as the example of my own country illustrates, notions of sending and hosting countries change — sometimes rapidly — over time.

In conclusion, as I have tried to outline, we have tools and guidance to address racism, including racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration. In spite of the major global challenges now to be faced, we can point to progress that has been made in the past half-century. To move forward, we need to recognize that sidestepping or denying racism individually or institutionally, which those in whose honour this day is named refuse to do, cannot lead to its elimination — and nor will a refusal to acknowledge its complexities and intersectionality with other forms of oppression. Xenophobic explanations that justify our fears against their rights ignore the reality articulated in the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action: that xenophobia is one of the main contributors to current racism, in particular against migrants.

Taking action also requires us to know what we are talking about. Knowing what we are talking about requires us to collect data in disaggregated ways so that we can understand and address who has been affected

by the issue, how they are affected and in what way they are affected.

Moving forward successfully is possible only with the full engagement and active participation of those targeted by racial discrimination. As we women know, "nothing about us without us" is not an automatic guarantee of success; however, it is an essential ingredient in any fight for equality. Moving forward must also mean we move forward together, an idea that was captured well in the title of the Secretary-General's "Together Campaign". That requires working towards eliminating the barriers, in particular those discussed today, that obstruct togetherness at all levels. At the same time as the campaign does, we need to celebrate the achievements of individual towns, cities, communities and groups that demonstrate their human capacity to work towards a future that can be described as "together for all".

Moving forward is possible as long as we continue to believe, as did Nelson Mandela — whom the President quoted earlier — that nobody is born to hate. People learn to hate, and so can learn to love.

I thank the Assembly and wish it good luck in leading us forward.

The President: In accordance with the decision just taken, I now give the floor to Mr. Mutuma Ruteere, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

Mr. Ruteere: It is an honour to have been invited to speak today before the plenary of the General Assembly on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, specifically the theme of racial profiling and incitement to hatred. I thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this timely event, and Member States for the invitation to address the Assembly. I would also like to warmly congratulate Ms. Louise Arbour on her appointment as Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Migration. I look forward to working together with her on these issues.

It is not by chance that the first global human rights treaty adopted by the United Nations was the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Racism and racial discrimination took centre stage in many of the major crises of the twentieth century. The turn of the century represented the hope that we had left behind the brutalities of the twentieth century, with its wars, repressive Governments and institutionalized discrimination, and that the new ideas of human rights and cosmopolitanism, within and beyond borders, would make the twenty-first century a more humane and kinder place. The optimism of those who believed that we are entering a new period has not been displaced completely, for today we are heirs to a global consensus on values of human rights, and in particular on the avoidance of discrimination on the basis of race, colour and ethnic origin.

In the second decade of the 2000s, we now also know more about one another than at any other period in history. Television, the Internet and air travel have all erased the physical barriers that previously isolated and confined humankind to their localities and regions. In spite of all this progress, however, intolerance, prejudice and discrimination continue to haunt the globe, and the limits of the values of human rights are tested every day, particularly with regard to migration and the treatment of those who cross borders in search of a better life or safety. It is therefore fitting that last year 193 States Members of the United Nations adopted the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1) and rededicated themselves to ensuring that human rights are integral to any measures designed to address and regulate migration and population movements.

Since 2011, as Special Rapporteur, I have followed and studied the phenomena of racism and racial discrimination all over the world and regularly cautioned that, whereas progress has been made in addressing some of the more open and blatant forms of racial, ethnic and xenophobic discrimination, the problem persists and, in some cases, has worsened. In particular, the encounters between migrants and law-enforcement agencies in various parts of the world have severely shaken the foundations, and threatened the integrity of, the international system of human rights law.

In my thematic report to the Human Rights Council in June 2015, I addressed the issue of racial and ethnic profiling in law enforcement, which is widespread in many parts of the world. Racial and ethnic profiling in law enforcement is fundamentally discriminatory in nature and exacerbates violations already suffered on account of ethnic origin or minority status. For many migrants, racial profiling has meant inordinate and unjustifiable stop-and-frisk or stop-and-check

measures by law enforcement without objective or justifiable reason. In some cases, such stops have resulted in prolonged, unfair and illegal detention, unjust prosecution and, in some cases, violence.

Official border crossings and transportation hubs — such as airports, railway stations and bus depots — are common places where racial and ethnic profiling take place. At these locations, customs, border and security agencies have subjected individuals to additional security checks and interviews solely based on their national origin, religion, race or membership in a minority group. New technologies used to create risk profiles for specific ethnic groups raise the possibility that racial and ethnic profiling may become a regularized and permanent fixture of immigration and border-control management systems around the world.

In addressing the issue of profiling, it is important to underline the value of legislative measures that comprehensively prohibit racial and ethnic discrimination and the need for clear and enforceable regulations that provide guidance to law-enforcement agencies. Furthermore, investigative oversight bodies should have the authority to address allegations of racial and ethnic profiling and make practical recommendations for policy changes. These bodies should be able to conduct self-initiated investigations, as such measures are fundamental to identifying discrimination and profiling by law-enforcement agencies.

The problem of profiling — and, indeed, the problem of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia — persists partly due to the invisibility of the victims and the lack of data, statistics and research on the nature and extent of the problem. The collection of law-enforcement data disaggregated by ethnicity, race, gender and other relevant categories is a prerequisite if we are to identify the patterns of discrimination and map existing gaps, increase the visibility of discriminated groups and enable their recognition, which, in some cases, is otherwise denied. Data is also crucial for evaluating the impact of existing measures and developing adequately informed policies to redress the situation of vulnerable groups. It is fitting that the Sustainable Development Goals have stressed the role of collection and use of disaggregated data in development and in addressing the contemporary problems of discrimination and exclusion.

Migration, coupled with fears over terrorism and the pressures of struggling economies, has given fresh wind to racist and xenophobic movements that seek to exploit and turn fears over the future into the fear of migrants and strangers. Unfortunately, these movements and groups, previously confined to the fringes of politics, have in some places found their way into the mainstream of political life. Such movements and their leaders provide the rhetorical and political justification for practices such as racial profiling.

In conclusion, it is important on this occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to reiterate that human rights values remind us that the stranger is no less deserving of the freedom and equality we all cherish. The justice at the core of human rights norms and laws is not restricted to those that belong to our familial or confessional, national, racial or ethnic community. Rather, human rights speak to a notion of justice that treats the stranger as it does those we love and share kinship with. It is not surprising therefore that all major religions remind us that in the stranger is the face of God.

I look forward to working with Member States to enhance the development of a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration, and in particular to ensure that we collectively address the challenges of racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia through the compact. I also look forward to working with Member States, the Secretary-General and other experts on the "Together Campaign" to promote diversity, respect and inclusion for all.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cabo Verde, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Fialho Rocha (Cabo Verde): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of African States.

The Group thanks the President of the General Assembly for convening this commemorative plenary meeting today to celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, under the theme "Racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration". Indeed, by this Day and its celebration, we affirm and renew our deep and global political will to fully and effectively implement the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the outcomes of the 2009 Durban Review Conference. Adopted at the 2001 World Conference

against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa, the Programme of Action remains the most comprehensive action-oriented global framework to combat racism, xenophobia and related intolerance, including in the troubled contexts that characterize today's migration.

The Group welcomes the progress made at the national, regional and international levels in conformity with the obligations and commitments of Durban to effectively combat racism and racial discrimination, protect the rights of migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers as well as racial, national, ethnic and linguistic minorities, and to combat incitement to hatred based on religion, belief or colour. We recognize that colonialism, apartheid and political, social or cultural aversion against human diversity have led to racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and that, even today, large groups of people continue to be victims of this scourge and its consequences. Furthermore, the persistence of these structures and practices today is and remains among the factors contributing to lasting social and economic inequalities and discrimination in many parts of the world.

The African Group reaffirms its appreciation to the General Assembly for launching in 2015 the International Decade for People of African Descent, under the theme "People of African Descent: recognition, justice and development", whose main objective is to promote respect, protection and the fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of people of African descent. We are of the view that Governments should reinforce protections against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance by ensuring that everyone has access to effective and adequate redress and enjoys the right to seek just and adequate reparation and satisfaction from the competent natural tribunals or institutions for any damage resulting from such discrimination.

We have witnessed the discriminatory hardships that people of African descent face all over the world, and the way in which the international community addresses those hardships by advocating action aimed at promoting their full enjoyment of their economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights, as well as respect for their diverse heritage and cultures. With the diaspora being Africa's sixth region, the African Union continues to take every opportunity to create bridges across it. The Group of African States recognizes the positive contribution that the exercise of the right to free expression through the media and other, newer information technologies, including the Internet, and full respect for the freedom to seek, receive and impart information, can make to the fight against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. At the same time, we are concerned about the use of the new information technologies, including the Internet, for purposes that run counter to respect for human rights values. We believe that Internet providers should develop and abide by codes of conduct that help to prevent trafficking and protect its victims, while strengthening measures to prevent the trafficking of women and girls, provide for their care and rehabilitation and address issues related to international displacement.

The African Group believes that a quality education for all citizens helps to create more inclusive societies and more harmonious relations among nations and individuals, and fosters mutual understanding and respect for cultural diversity and human rights for all. The Group reiterates the importance of requiring justice for victims of human rights violations that result from racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. In the light of their vulnerabilities, they should be assured of access to justice and effective, appropriate protections and remedies.

In conclusion, the African Group condemns every kind of discrimination in any circumstances, including discrimination against displaced persons in the context of migration or against asylum-seekers. We affirm our commitment to the full, speedy and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action with a view to sustaining the momentum and gains achieved at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. We should convene a second conference to help build synergies between the progress that has been made and new partnerships in implementing the Durban targets and indicators. It is time to act, and we must do it now if we truly want to achieve meaningful, positive change in dealing with this scourge.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Malaysia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Rosdi (Malaysia): On behalf of my Permanent Representative, who is on an official visit to Geneva, I have the honour to speak for the States members of the

Group of Asia-Pacific States in Malaysia's capacity as the Group's Chair for the month of March.

At the outset, we would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening today's special meeting to commemorate this important date, the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The theme of this year's observance of the International Day is racial profiling and incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration. The theme is apt, appropriate and timely, and we are therefore very grateful to Ms. Louise Arbour, Ms. Anastasia Crickley and Mr. Mutuma Ruteere for sharing their knowledge and experience on the issue, along with their forward-looking recommendations, which speak volumes for the importance of their presence here today in commemorating this occasion.

The countries of our region are multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual societies. At the same time, they are experiencing increases in movements of people with varying reasons for their growing levels of migration — including having to flee brutal conflicts — similar to other migrations that we are witnessing all over the world today. The Governments and administrations of receiving countries are dealing with significant challenges in trying to overcome obstacles to the inclusion and integration of migrants into their societies, including in the areas of education, health, dignity, cultural values and economic and social development. But those are not the only challenges, for social discontent, isolated or otherwise, has in some instances led to racial profiling and incitement to hatred. Such worrying situations demand positive decisions and action, as well as the necessary political will and means to ensure that the struggle to combat racism and eliminate racial discrimination can succeed. Laws and social practices that are racially discriminatory should be phased out or abolished altogether. We must mobilize our collective will, at the national, regional and international levels, together with the requisite support of all the relevant stakeholders in the private sector and civil-society organizations, to address such social discontent and eliminate incitement to hatred based on unwarranted racial profiling.

We also have the responsibility to ensure adherence to the relevant international human rights instruments, and their full and effective implementation, if we are to address the scourge of racism and racial discrimination. It is clear to us that the core international human rights instruments place obligations on States to work positively to eradicate discrimination in the public and private arenas. Related to that, the principle of equality also obliges States to adopt specific measures that serve to eliminate the conditions that sustain or contribute to the prevalence of racial discrimination. That premise is one of the foundations of this International Day. Together, we have agreed that we must fight such prejudice with the greatest possible determination and perseverance, since it continues to tarnish our humanity. The struggle against racial discrimination is a fight for human rights and dignity. Today is a sobering reminder to us all that despite the progress we have achieved so far, we are still a long way from eliminating this scourge, and that racism, xenophobia and intolerance remain in all our societies. At the same time, we are also reminded today that there is something we can all do — that each and every one of us can and must play a role at a personal level in breaking down racial prejudice and intolerant attitudes. We must find ways to reach out to society and address social discontent, as well as to educate young people in understanding, celebrating and enjoying the world's diversity.

Lastly, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, I would once again like to declare and reiterate our strong commitment and unwavering determination to make sure that the struggle to eliminate racial discrimination remains a high priority in our countries and throughout the world.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Moldova, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States.

Mr. Lupan (Republic of Moldova): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

After decades of continued efforts at the international, regional and national levels, racism and xenophobia continue to affect a significant number of people. The economic crisis that the international community has experienced in recent years, rising unemployment and the unprecedented movement of refugees and migrants have increased the incidence of racist behaviour, hate crimes and malicious expressions of hate and racist sentiments. Those negative manifestations go against the fundamental principles of the equality of all human beings and are a violation of human rights.

Sixteen years ago, the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, adopted the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. They remain valid leading directives for international, regional and national actions against racism. The promotion of tolerance, mutual respect of cultures, traditions and faiths are important elements in achieving a world free of racism. While all Eastern European countries are party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, in a world of globalization we should continue to pool together our efforts in order to further ensure respect for human rights, as well as the safe and sustainable development of all of our countries.

Focusing on the implementation of international commitments arising from the United Nations human rights treaties is key in our continuous work towards creating a world free of racism and discrimination. Concurrently, cooperation with treaty-monitoring bodies is essential to promoting multilateral dialogue in the area of human rights, and in developing international institutional mechanisms to cooperatively address those challenges. The United Nations normative framework provides an invaluable source of legal standards with the centrality of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which represents the backbone of our national, regional and international efforts towards fighting that scourge.

This symbolic day reminds us that we should recommit to enhancing our efforts against the scourge of human suffering, so that no one is left behind in our efforts to build peaceful, secure and sustainable societies.

Mr. Mnatsakanyan (Armenia), Vice-President, too the Chair.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC).

Allow me to first express my deep appreciation to the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Thomson, for convening this plenary meeting in commemoration of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. We also welcome Ms. Louise Arbour, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration; Ms. Anastasia Crickley, Chair of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination; and Mr. Mutuma Ruteere, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. Their participation here is another show of the commitment of the General Assembly to tackling the many challenges that lie ahead.

Fifty-two years ago, the General Assembly adopted resolution 2106 (XX), establishing the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, one of the oldest human rights conventions. The Convention resolved:

> "to adopt all necessary measures for speedily eliminating racial discrimination in all its forms and manifestations, and to prevent and combat racist doctrines and practices in order to promote understanding between races and to build an international community free from all forms of racial segregation and racial discrimination".

Although humankind has made progress on several fronts, and has reached several milestones on commitments that we, as Member States, have set for ourselves in order to successfully meet the objective of the Convention, much remains to be done if we are to completely eliminate the discrimination and oppression from our daily lives.

Many of the countries in our region are comprised of multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual populations. Our societies benefit from the richness of the diversity of our peoples, and we therefore recognize that promoting the full participation and effective contribution of our citizens is vital for achieving just, inclusive and balanced societies — which is the only path to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In that sense, the countries of our region are convinced that sustainable development is unachievable unless everyone is included, regardless of racial, linguistic or cultural differences.

Nevertheless, in recent years, the world has witnessed an unprecedented increase in racial actions and insults over cultural, religious or ethnic differences — behaviour fuelled by hatred, ignorance and a lack of empathy and understanding — all of them exacerbated by hatred.

GRULAC reiterates its firm determination to promote the full inclusion of all people in their societies, regardless of race, origin, ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, gender or age. We strive to achieve a region and a world free of racial discrimination, as well as ensuring viable and cohesive societies for future generations. It is unacceptable that in this millennium, the human rights and dignity of many people are not protected owing to hatred, racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. We therefore urge all Member States to reject hatred and to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies that are free from fear and violence. Of course, the antidote to all those opprobrious practices is tolerance of, and respect for, beliefs or practices that are different from or contrary to one's own, as long as they are objectively morally acceptable.

The construction of walls between countries is a clear expression of racial and ethnic discrimination and rejection. The countries of our region make up an ethnic and racial mosaic of the immigrant men and women from all over the world. The diversity of our peoples is an asset, which is why we are greatly concerned that political campaigns are predicated on discrimination and racism. Migrant families are frequently targeted by measures that violate their fundamental human rights, their unity and integrity — all justified by reference to unrelated security concerns. Make no mistake: behind that rhetoric lies racism and xenophobia. As a result, our region remains firmly committed to critical initiatives and processes, such as intergovernmental negotiations for the process of adopting a global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration.

It is time to confront the violence, inequalities and repression suffered by our peoples and to work in a unified way to achieve sustainable development in all of its dimensions, especially for those who are exploited, unprotected and disadvantaged — the most vulnerable — to ensure that they are treated with dignity and solidarity.

It is worth noting what Shakespeare wrote with absolute clarity in his work *The Merchant of Venice*:

> "[Have we] not eyes? [Have we] not hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer [...]? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?"

If we are like all the others, then we are all alike.

In summary, GRULAC will continue to support and spearhead collective action at the United Nations to implement the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations, which clearly strives to

> "reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, [and] to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom [in order] to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours."

Ms. Young (Belize), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Our gathering today serves as an important reminder that, more than 50 years after the adoption of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, many people still suffer from racial discrimination in their daily lives. We continue to see unacceptable violence directed at people because of their race, skin colour or ethnic origin. Racial discrimination is a global scourge and no country or region is free of it. Although we have made undeniable progress and taken many concrete steps at the national and international levels, many challenges remain.

With regard to this year's theme, I would like to underline that the use of racial profiling on the basis of ethnic, racial or religious affiliation, or on any other grounds, is prohibited under several international human rights instruments. It is important for States to take active measures and enact the relevant legislation prohibiting the use of such profiling. As recommended by Special Rapporteur Mutuma Ruteere, States should provide clear instructions and practical training to law-enforcement agencies and ensure effective monitoring.

In the fight against racial profiling, we can build on a comprehensive international legal framework, the heart of which is the almost universally ratified International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The Convention's treaty body — the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination — plays an essential role in ensuring respect for the Convention by monitoring its implementation and by assisting States in developing policies to combat racial discrimination. It remains important that States take active measures to fully implement their obligations under the Convention.

At the same time, we note other initiatives aimed at combating racism in all its forms, such as the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action of 2001. We recognize the importance of prevention and concerted action, especially in the field of education, and that a focus on practical and concrete measures can contribute to the elimination of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. When we fight racial discrimination, we should also work with a very active civil-society network that closely monitors and alerts us whenever it detects instances of racial discrimination or hatred.

Unfortunately, the general trend we observe today is that discrimination is on the rise. We still see many forms of discrimination, for example on the basis of race, beliefs or convictions. Let us remain vigilant and act against all forms of discrimination, including against migrants and refugees, as we pledged to do in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (resolution 71/1). We must speak out for diversity and pluralism if we want to ensure dignity. Human rights are universal by definition and apply to all of us equally. Inclusive societies recognize and respect diversity as a source of strength. They cherish diversity as an asset for the advancement and welfare of humankind.

Mr. Long (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): Today we celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and recall the tragedy that occurred on 21 March 1960, better known as the Sharpeville massacre. On that day, the South African police killed 69 protesters who were holding peaceful demonstrations against the racist and segregationist apartheid regime.

Since the end of the Second World War, the United Nations has endorsed various universally valid legal instruments. Through them, the international community has pledged not to discriminate against anyone on the basis of, inter alia, race, colour, gender, language, politics, religion, nationality, social origin or property ownership. As a species, we have also recognized that freedom, dignity and equal rights are inherent to humankind and, as such, they cannot be violated; and yet they are very often breached. Individuals, States and corporations continue to discriminate against individuals.

Human rights cannot be trampled on in the name of State sovereignty, an advance in doctrine afforded by the Nuremberg Trials. Respect for such rights is a principle that must prevail over internal electoral tensions. It includes people in extremely vulnerable situations who migrate and/or seek refuge. Humankind does not need high walls, but rather longer bridges. If we remove the causes of war and abject poverty, which would require fairer international relations and sufficient financing for development, forced human displacement would be a thing of the past.

The global migration crisis requires solidarity and international policies to promote peace and socioeconomic prosperity. Ecuador's Constitution is advanced in the area of migration. It recognizes the principles of universal citizenship and the free movement of people. We seek to be consistent, protecting our own migrants throughout the world but also welcoming the citizens of the world who wish to live in and enrich our country with their cultural diversity. Foreigners who have lived in our country for more than five years have the right to vote and can serve as public officials. We have hosted 60,000 refugees, mostly brothers and sisters who have fled the Colombian conflict, the end of which we welcome, celebrate and actively support.

Many of our fellow countrymen and women were forced out of Ecuador at the end of the last century and at the beginning of the current one by a financial and economic crisis caused by irresponsible and unscrupulous bankers who controlled the various Governments that assumed power. That plutocratic regime was responsible for the incestuous relationship that existed between financial power and political power, which prevented political decisions from being taken for the common good.

In the past decade, the Government of President Correa has restored dignity and provided support to Ecuadorians living in other countries. Through our embassies and consulates, the Ecuadorian Government

has provided legal and psychological assistance to Ecuadorians affected by the mortgage crisis in Spain and to distressed mothers and fathers who lost custody of their children in Italy. From 2010 until February this year, our Government has supported 158,000 Ecuadorians who found themselves in vulnerable situations abroad. Moreover, we have designed fiscal and credit policies to promote the economic reintegration of those Ecuadorians who have decided to return to their country. Today many migrants are returning to Ecuador, their country, which welcomes them with open arms.

More than half a century has elapsed since that sad day of 21 March 1960. Despite our expectations following the end of South African apartheid and other segregationist regimes, we are currently witnessing a resurgence of xenophobic views and racist policies that must be of concern to us all and receive a firm and unanimous response from the countries of the world.

Ecuador has the honour of chairing the Group of 77. With its experience in the area of the free movement of people, which is an initiative that requires cooperation among countries, our Government renews its determination to strengthening the doctrine of human rights from a structural, integral and indivisible perspective that will be a doctrine steeped in the struggle — the common cause of all — to eradicate racial discrimination.

Ms. Shabangu (South Africa): South Africa welcomes the convening of this commemorative event to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Today, 21 March, is also a very significant day in South Africa, on which we celebrate Human Rights Day, marking a date in our history, in 1960, when 69 people died at the hands of the brutal apartheid regime and an additional 180 were wounded in Sharpeville while protesting former oppressive laws and fighting to proclaim the recognition of their human dignity and equality and their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Although South Africa recognizes the importance of addressing the contemporary manifestations of all the scourges of racism, some of which have taken violent forms — the essence of today's commemoration, which primarily concerns the historical injustices of racism and the related legacies of slavery — the slave trade, the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism and apartheid must not be forgotten. The outcome of the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, held in Durban in 2001, namely, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, is very emphatic that the legacies of historical injustices must be expiated.

The agenda item under which today's event is being held, namely, racial profiling, incitement to hatred, including in the context of migration, could not be more timely given the current migration crisis that the world is facing. Now more than ever, the posturing and rhetoric concerning the elimination of the scourges of racism must stop. The community must jointly and severally face the everyday realities presented by the challenges of migration, including the ongoing incitement to hatred towards migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. Regrettably, at the global level, we are witnessing a growing display of anti-migrant sentiments and the infringement of their human dignity. State-sponsored xenophobia should not be tolerated. That is unacceptable and must be addressed by the international community.

South Africa is no exception to experiencing the challenges that accompany building an inclusive, equal and tolerant society for all its members, to be free from want and fear, while at the same time addressing historical injustices and past socioeconomic disparities, thereby ensuring a unified country. South Africa's constitutional democracy is predicated on the fundamental principle of non-discrimination. We continue to develop and elaborate national legislation and policies aimed at ensuring respect for the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms with zero tolerance for impunity for violations, including those grounded in xenophobia towards migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers. We urge all those who have the courage and requisite political will to combat all the scourges of racism and optimally utilize the Durban Programme of Action. That is the only instructive outcome of the United Nations World Conference against Racism, with all the essential ingredients, wich prescribe concrete measures and remedies for the elimination of all those unwanted and repudiated scourges.

Migrants may face multiple forms of discrimination, which are too often informed by negative stereotypes, stigmatization, perceptions and attitudes, including on religion and belief. Such racial profiling leads to discriminatory policies, practices and behaviours, very often resulting in the systematic violation of their rights. The international community has an obligation

to ensure that all people, including migrants, regardless of their immigration status, are at all times treated in a dignified manner and on an anti-discriminatory basis according to which their human rights and fundamental freedoms are respected, promoted, protected and realized.

Today, we find ourselves in a world in which globalization and technology have led to increased platforms and opportunities for exercising the right to freedom of opinion and expression, at times at the expense of the rights of others. That right is not without responsibility and cannot be limitless. The worrying growing trend of incitement to hatred and violence perpetrated and propagated through social media and other platforms, in particular those targeted at migrants and refugees, calls for, inter alia, the imperative need to elaborate legislation that criminalizes such hideous acts, which infringe on the human dignity of others and result only in a divisive society. It is for that reason that South Africa is leading a process within the Human Rights Council to elaborate additional protocols to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, covering xenophobia and incitement to hatred, among others.

South Africa reiterates its unwavering commitment to the eradication of all forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related tolerance, and urges the international community to take all the necessary measures nationally, regionally and globally to eradicate discrimination in all its forms, including in the context of migration. Only then will we be able to benefit from a world that is truly inclusive, tolerant and respectful of diversity and human dignity for all.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): The unprecedented increase in racial discrimination, xenophobia and Islamophobia in many parts of the world is a matter of absolute concern. We in particular deplore the racist language and policies widely used by some political parties and politicians who are fanning Islamophobia and anti-migrant rhetoric to manipulate public opinion. A close look at some recent general elections serves to underline how anti-immigration and xenophobic narratives, in particular Islamophobic ones, are exploited for targeting the very values and principles of democracy. The fact that currently many inflammatory remarks are made against refugees demonstrates the unprecedented level to which the political discourse is tainted with racism and xenophobia, and in particular Islamophobia.

The executive order known as the "travel ban", which has spurred widespread opposition among public opinion and civil rights groups, is an example of the flagrant violation of many norms and instruments of international law and international human rights law, including the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, as it discriminates based on nationality and religion. It is also in violation of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.

The responsibility of the United Nations and its Member States in the face of this gloomy situation cannot be overemphasized. What followed in the release in recent weeks by a United Nations body of a report on the heinous actions of the apartheid regime of Israel is disheartening and shows how high the price of the truth may be. The report reflects reality — and if it looks discomforting, we should do something about it. Otherwise, we would be surprised if world public opinion continued to see the United Nations as a reliable and trustworthy partner in tackling such serious issues as racism and apartheid.

In conclusion, let me emphasize that the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, along with CERD, should continue to constitute the road map for combating all forms of racism and intolerance.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank the President for organizing this meeting to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which was adopted 50 years ago, is an essential instrument in the fight against discrimination. Unfortunately, it remains all too relevant today.

France is working within international bodies and attempting to ensure that hate speech and discrimination, including towards migrants, are condemned, and it is doing everything it can to prevent those things from happening.

In France, the freedom of expression is an inalienable right. It is enshrined in our Constitution. Like any freedom, it is not absolute. Nobody is free to commit a crime or an infraction without being punished, in particular with regard to racist or anti-Semitic language or acts. In France, racism is a crime, like any other form of discrimination, on the basis of real or imagined origin

or for belonging or not belonging to an ethnic group, a nation, a race or a faith, in particular religion. Racism is never an opinion that can be freely expressed.

In its fight against intolerance, France does not privilege any particular kind of discrimination over another. Be they anti-Semitic, anti-Islam, anti-Christian, anti-Roma or homophobic, all acts of intolerance and discrimination are vigorously condemned by public authorities and are subject to legal prosecution.

The fight against racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia is one of France's human rights priorities. This fight is also being carried out by the highest bodies in the country as a national cause following the events of January 2015. France adopted its second national action plan against racism and anti-Semitism for 2015-2017, which includes powerful measures.

More than ever before, we must all work together to ensure that the principles that we uphold in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination are fully implemented.

Mrs. Rodríguez Abascal (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The full implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action remains a pending issue in the fight for equal rights among all human beings. We view with concern that, in many countries and regions of the world, racism, racial discrimination and xenophobia continue to emerge, including in new and more sophisticated forms. This is reflected in the appearance of associations and political parties with racist platforms; the persistence of, and increase in, social exclusion and the marginalization of peoples, ethnic groups, minorities and other categories of social groups or peoples; the negative impact of racial profiling in the elaboration and implementation of policies; the proliferation of discriminatory migration policies and laws; and the adoption of anti-terrorist laws that open the door to arbitrariness and public action taken on a discriminatory, racist and xenophobic basis.

It is high time that an end be put to discrimination against races, ethnic groups, nations and entire communities. Racial hatred and violence against a group of people because of their origin, race or beliefs should be combated and eliminated. We must adopt effective measures to respond to the root causes of these problems and to address the circumstances that empower them. We must establish an express prohibition of the use of racial and ethnic profiling by bodies that are responsible for enforcing the law.

It is increasingly urgent to place greater emphasis on the treatment of this subject in the manifestations and on the potential impact both by States and by the United Nations bodies that deal with these questions or others related to it. This could help promote efforts to give this issue the priority it deserves on the political agendas of the countries that are most affected.

We share the view expressed in this Hall that the discussions aimed at a global compact to address the issue of migrants provides an opportunity that should be taken advantage of by all States in order to focus on the challenges that we must address in combating racial discrimination and to create policies that make it possible to move forward towards finding solutions to the problems identified and to establish international cooperation for a world in which equality, mutual respect and social justice prevail.

We also wish to express our commitment to continue making our contribution to combating racism beyond our borders through disinterested and voluntary cooperation and by sacrificing the needs of our volunteers, who have never taken issue with the skin colour or social status of a person anywhere in the world in order to lend a hand of international solidarity.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 66?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.

United Nations A/71/PV.73

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

Official Records

73rd plenary meeting
Friday, 24 March 2017, 3 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 119 (*continued*)

Commemoration of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade

Commemorative meeting of the General Assembly to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

The President: Today, for the tenth time, we mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. It is a day to remember, reflect and recommit to action. I think of a sentiment often ascribed to South African pianist Abdullah Ibrahim:

> "People say that slaves were taken from Africa. This is not true. People were taken from Africa, among them healers and priests, and were made into slaves."

Those words are a stark reminder of the depth of inhumanity and suffering inflicted by the scourge of slavery on the lives of so many. More than 15 million African men, women and children were victims of that cruel and barbaric practice, brutally uprooted from their families and homes and transported in unthinkable conditions to far-off lands to be exploited for economic gain. Many lost their lives on their perilous journeys, as did others in their heroic attempts to resist enslavement. Those who survived were subjected to degrading and dehumanizing treatment at the hands of their captors, usually lasting until the end of their days. It was a practice of unfathomable cruelty and callousness that astonishingly continued for over 400 years.

Today, as we honour the victims, let us therefore take a moment to remember the people — the men, women and children — whose lives, hopes, dreams and potential were extinguished by the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade. Let us use this opportunity to renew our determination to ensure that this dark scar on humankind's history — this crime against humanity — is not repeated ever again.

However, this commitment requires active engagement, investment and resolve from us all. We must commit to promoting and protecting the human rights of all people, including by upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other relevant international instruments. We must commit to stamping out racism, prejudice and xenophobia in all its manifestations, including by educating people about these painful pages in human history; it is part of our efforts to promote intercultural understanding. We must commit to ending all vestiges of modern forms of slavery, including human trafficking, forced labour and child labour. When these acts do occur, we must commit to the pursuit of justice and accountability for those who perpetrate these crimes. We must commit to ensuring that the lessons of history are shared with future generations, including the treatment of the victims and the conditions that allowed it to occur.

Commemorations such as today's and the *Ark of Return* memorial outside United Nations

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Headquarters — and I hope that all our visitors will see it this afternoon before they depart from the United Nations campus — are powerful reminders of the scale of the tragedy, the horrors of enslavement and the need for vigilance against warning signs of racism, bigotry and dehumanization of others. I thank the Member States that contributed to the permanent memorial fund for the *Ark of Return*, the Department of Public Information for its important work under the "Remember Slavery: Celebrating the Heritage and Culture of the African Diaspora and its Roots" programme, and UNESCO for its work through its Slave Route project.

The theme of this year's commemoration, "Remember slavery: recognizing the legacy and contributions of people of African descent", could not be more timely. It is a reminder that the consequences of enslavement do not end at emancipation, but continue to be felt by many to this day. Some of these consequences have been negative, including systematic poverty, inequality and social, economic and political marginalization. But others have been hugely positive, including the contribution that descendants have made to shaping our modern, multicultural societies and to ensuring that the memories of their ancestors continue to live on.

Let us therefore commit to righting past wrongs. Let us ensure that the development gains under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reach those who continue to bear the intergenerational scars of slavery. Let us ensure that the tragedy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade are never forgotten.

I now give the floor to the Secretary-General.

The Secretary-General: It is an honour to join the General Assembly in commemorating the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. We must never forget this dark chapter of human history, and we must always remember the role played by many of our countries — including my own, Portugal — in carrying out the largest forced migration in history and in robbing so many millions of people of their dignity and often also of their lives.

The legacy of slavery resounds through the ages. The world has yet to overcome racism. Many countries still suffer from economic patterns and decisions set in motion long ago. Many families still keenly feel the trauma imposed on their forebears. We must continue to recognize the persistent pain of this legacy even in the present moment. Moreover, we know that while some forms of slavery may have been abolished, others have emerged to blight our world, including human trafficking and forced and bonded labour. Heeding the lessons of yesterday means fighting these ills today.

The theme for this year's International Day, "Remember slavery: recognizing the legacy and contributions of people of African descent," invites us to pay tribute to the many achievements of the African diaspora. We see these contributions in every field of human endeavour. The descendants of slaves have made their mark as inventors, economists and jurists, as authors and scholars, as artists and athletes, as politicians and civil rights leaders.

Mae Jemison was the first African-American woman to enter outer space. She is among the distinguished individuals of African descent who are being honoured in an exhibition currently on display in our Visitors' Lobby. One descendant of slaves made an imprint on the United Nations itself: Ralph Bunche, the first African-American to win a Nobel Prize and one of the most respected and celebrated international civil servants in the history of the Organization. It seems especially appropriate at this commemorative meeting to recall the life and work of Derek Walcott, the poet and Nobel laureate from Saint Lucia who died one week ago today. In poems and other writings, he confronted the brutality of slavery and the legacy of colonialism. In "The Sea is History", for example, he gave us the searing image of "men with eyes as heavy as anchors/ who sank without tombs".

The United Nations and I personally attach the greatest importance to the challenge of slavery, past and present. Through our Remember Slavery programme, we will continue shedding light on tragedies related to slavery and highlighting the impressive and living contributions that people of African descent are making to their communities and to our world. These are two crucial ways through which we can combat racism.

At this time of rising divisiveness, let us unite against hatred and let us build a world of freedom and dignity for all.

The President: I thank the Secretary-General his moving statement.

Before proceeding further, and as indicated in my letter dated 21 March 2017, I should like to consult members with a view to inviting Mr. Lonnie Bunch,

Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, to make a keynote statement on this occasion.

If there is no objection, may I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly, without setting a precedent, to invite Mr. Lonnie Bunch to make a keynote statement at this commemorative meeting?

It was so decided.

The President: I now have the pleasure and the honour of giving the floor to Mr. Bunch.

Mr. Bunch (Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture): I am extremely honoured and humbled to speak before the General Assembly today as we mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

I would suggest that one can tell a great deal about a people, about a country, by what it deems important enough to remember, what it builds monuments to celebrate, what graces a country's museums or what holidays it embraces. Yet I would argue that we learn even more about a country by what it chooses to forget, what it cloaks in silence. Nowhere is this silence more deafening than when countries are confronted with the issue of slavery and the slave trade.

I am haunted by the fact that few countries make a major effort to remember publicly the slave past or the horrors of the slave trade. We should all be haunted because not knowing and not remembering the history, the legacy and the contemporary meaning of slavery hurts the living and dishonours the millions who have experienced the slave trade and the millions who have survived the institution of slavery and the thousands who fought for the abolition of this evil.

That is why events like this Day of Remembrance are fitting tributes to our ancestors because they give voice to the anonymous. It makes the unseen visible and ensures that people will remember. But it is essential that we do more than simply acknowledge history. We must embrace the contemporary resonance of slavery. We must find a past that is useful and usable. We must understand how slavery has shaped in profound ways so many nations, and that in essence slavery is as much alive today as it was 200 years ago. After all, it is slavery and the slave trade that made the modern world, and, as a nineteenth-century philosopher once wrote, unless we deal with the rough edges of a country's past, the experiences of earlier generations will weigh like a nightmare on the living.

Remembering slavery calls for a paradigm shift that helps to redefine the public's notions about the lives of the men and women who were enslaved. Candidly, many in America are uncomfortable, and sometimes embarrassed, by their ancestors held in bondage. They will remember that the enslaved were bought, but not that they were brave. They will remember that the enslaved were sold, but not that they were strong. They will remember the pain of the enslaved, but not their hopefulness. I once received a letter from a member of Congress who said to me, "Why can't you just make slavery go away?" This Day of Remembrance ensures that the memory and meaning of slavery will never go away. I hope that days like today ensure that, rather than a sense of embarrassment or discomfort, this Day will help people find understanding and knowledge.

Personally, I am in awe of my enslaved ancestors. I wish we all had their strength, their resilience, their creativity and their belief in a better future, which once seemed unimaginable. I stand in awe of the will that enabled millions to survive the slave trade, and I am deeply saddened every day by the millions who did not. I am moved by the courage of those who struck blows against the institution of slavery, or use their feet as a means of self-liberation. I am humbled by the actions of Toussaint L'Ouverture and Harriet Tubman, but I am even more impressed by the nameless men and women who rose every day and found that the field would not break them of their humanity or of their humour. I am amazed by those who struggle to keep their culture alive and their humanity intact. Rather than shame, I would argue, we should find strength. Rather than despair and embarrassment, we should find hope. Rather than loss, we should also find our humanity. And, more important, rather than forgetting, we should remember.

We can honour all the sons and daughters of Africa who were stolen, lost or forever changed by slavery — if we remove their lives from the margins and help the places that they called home in North America, South America and the Caribbean understand just how much their tint, their tone, their culture and their national identity was shaped by slavery and the slave trade. We honour the enslaved if we draw sustenance and inspiration from their sacrifices. More important, that would allow us to continue the struggle for fairness and social justice globally. After all, what better models for

achievement against the odds than those enslaved men and women?

Ultimately, the International Day of Remembrance is crucial because it is a wonderful, but uncompromising, mirror — a mirror that reminds us of our struggles and our losses, but it is also a mirror that reminds us of our great strength, of our noble ideals, of dreams and hopes that were once realized. The Day of Remembrance is an amazing mirror that illuminates all the dark corners of our history. This Day should remind us that we must give voice and visibility to the millions of Africans who have been lost to history. But it should also remind us of the need to struggle, to fight the good fight for racial and social justice. To me, a Day of Remembrance is a clarion call to remember. There is nothing more powerful than a people and a nation steeped in its history, and there is nothing more noble than honouring our ancestors and their struggles by remembering.

Let me conclude with the words of a formerly enslaved man. Cornelius Holmes was enslaved in the United States, and in 1939 he was asked, "Does slavery still matter?" His words are very powerful. He said,

> "Though the slavery question is settled, its impact is not. The question will be with us always. It is in our politics. It is in our courts. It is on our highways. It is in our manner. It is in our religion. And it is in our thoughts — all the day, every day."

Think about the gift we give to the world and to our ancestors if, through this Day of Remembrance, we can help people remember that they are profoundly shaped in form and touched to this present day by slavery, all day, every day.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Cabo Verde, who will speak on behalf of the Group of African States.

Mr. Fialho Rocha (Cabo Verde): I have the honour to deliver this statement in my capacity as Chair of the Group of African States for the month of March.

Every year, around March 25, we assemble to mark the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, established by resolution 62/122, in 2007, to honour their memory and to raise awareness of the dangers of racism and prejudice today, which are a direct consequence of that legacy. Indeed, it is one of the greatest tragedies in the history of humankind in terms of scale and duration.

I wish to extend our gratitude to the Steering Committee — whose membership is drawn from Member States from the Caribbean Community, the African Union, UNESCO and the Department of Public Information — for the activities and events planned as part of the Remember Slavery programme.

(*spoke in French*)

On 25 March 2015, the United Nations unveiled a permanent memorial located on the United Nations Visitors Plaza in New York. *The Ark of Return*, created by Haitian-American architect Rodney Leon, is a reminder of the legacy of the slave trade, but also of the importance that must be placed on recognizing the contribution of peoples of African descent.

The transatlantic slave trade lasted four centuries — 400 years of crimes against humanity. Human beings were the product traded. During that long and dark period in human history, there was also strong resistance. The first rebellion in the struggle for freedom came from captives and slaves themselves. The slave revolt on the night of 22 to 23 August 1791 in Santo Domingo, which today is Haiti and the Dominican Republic, was the start of an uprising that would play a crucial role in the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. Known as the Haitian Revolution, that revolt became a beacon of light and hope for the entire world. In the United States, the civil rights movement ensured full legal rights and equality for African-Americans at a time of Jim Crow racism.

(*spoke in English*)

The theme for this year is "Remember slavery: recognizing the legacy and contribution of people of African descent". The theme is illustrated in the exhibit in the United Nations Visitors Lobby entitled "A Legacy of Black Achievement".

This is to acknowledge the non-consensual contributions those enslaved peoples made to the world. Let us not forget the advancements in science, literature, music, culture, art, food and machinery. In addition, the world as we know it today would be very different without the contribution of the people of African descent. In addition, the transatlantic slave trade laid the foundation for capitalism, generating immense wealth in Europe and America. The trade contributed to the industrialization of north-western Europe. Slavery and colonialism were purely economic

driven, with profit being what incentivized one side of humankind to dehumanize the other.

Those who do not know the real Africa may assume that its history started with slavery and colonialism. The truth is that slavery and colonialism were an interruption of Africa's long and rich history. Slavery is not just about numbers. Imagine the lives of 18 million people, their hopes and dreams, their homes and community, and their culture and history. It was not just their present moment that was robbed, but also their nostalgia for a past future. It is often said that Africa is the greatest ghostwriter of all time.

As we take this day to remember the human beings who were ripped from their family and community, let us not turn a blind eye to injustices throughout the world today. How many of us learn of history and vow that if were in that moment in time, we would have chosen empathy, justice and morality? We should look deeply at our reflection in the mirror. We should ask ourselves what we are doing to fight injustices today.

Martin Luther King, Jr., said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends". Let us not be remembered for our silence but our recognition of the legacy of people of African Descent and to fight against all types of discrimination and racism in all its forms today. Let us honour each other and commemorate this day solemnly: "Lest we forget".

I want to close with a private note about my own country, Cape Verde, and the role it played in the transatlantic slave trade from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. To put it a simpler way, let me quote UNESCO:

> "The town of Ribeira Grande, renamed Cidade Velha in the late 18th century ... was an exceptional centre in the routes for international maritime trade, included in the routes between Africa and the Cape, Brazil and the Caribbean [and the United States]. It provides an early image of transcontinental geopolitical visions. Its insular position, isolated but close to the coasts of Africa, made it an essential platform for the Atlantic trade of enslaved persons of modern times. A place of concentration of enslaved persons and the inhuman practices of the trade of enslaved persons, Ribeira Grande was also exceptional in terms of the intercultural encounters from which stemmed the first developed Creole society ...
>
> "The monuments, the remains still present in Ribeira Grande and its maritime and agro-urban landscapes are testimony to its considerable role in international trade associated with the development of European colonial domination towards Africa and America and the birth of Atlantic triangular trade ...
>
> "The urban, maritime and landscape of Ribeira Grande provides eminent testimony to the origins and the development of over three centuries of Atlantic trade of enslaved persons in modern times and its relationships of domination. It was a major place for its commercial organization and the early experience of using enslaved persons to develop a colonial territory. The mixing of human races and the meeting of African and European cultures gave birth to the first Creole culture ...
>
> "Ribeira Grande is directly associated with the material manifestation of the history of the enslavement and trafficking of African peoples, and with its considerable cultural and economic consequences.
>
> "Ribeira Grande was the cradle of the first fully-fledged mixed-race Creole society. Creole culture then spread across the Atlantic, adapting to the different colonial contexts of the Caribbean and Americas. Its forms affected many fields, including the arts, social customs, beliefs, the pharmacopoeia and cooking techniques. Ribeira Grande is an important initial link in an intangible heritage shared by Africa, the Americas and Europe".

As a consequence of this heritage, both immaterial and material, witness not only to the human tragedy lived there as the foundation of a slave society, but also the cradle of a new man, the Creole, and a new nation, the Cabo Verdean nation, UNESCO classified Cidade Velha as a World Heritage Site in 2009.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Malaysia, who will speak on behalf of the Asia-Pacific States.

Mr. Yaakob (Malaysia): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the 54 States members of the Asia-Pacific Group of States as Chair for the month of March.

At the outset, we would like to thank you, Sir, for convening today's special meeting to commemorate the International Day for the Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

This year's theme, "Remember slavery: recognizing the legacy and contributions of people of African descent", is indeed appropriate and timely. The theme focuses on specific consequences of the transatlantic slave trade, namely, the ways in which enslaved Africans and their descendants influenced and continue to shape societies around the world.

We wish to express our appreciation to Mr. Lonnie Bunch, founding Director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture, for sharing his deep knowledge on this issue.

We acknowledge that this commemorative event is indeed an important one because it offers the opportunity to all of us to honour and remember those who suffered and died at the hands of the brutal slavery system. The International Day for the Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade also aims to raise awareness about the dangers of racism and prejudice that exist today. There is no doubt that today's event underscores the evils of slavery and its impact on humankind. Therefore, there is an urgent need for Member States and stakeholders to continue their efforts to eliminate all forms of slavery and its manifestations in our collective efforts to end the modern slavery that exists in all corners of the globe.

We reiterate our full support for creating a stronger legal framework for improving policies and practices, awareness, promote understanding and change attitudes by mobilizing our collective will to fight against modern slavery at the international, regional and national levels. It is our moral and shared responsibility, as well as our obligation, to ensure that our future generations do not become victims of slavery.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Asia-Pacific Group, we wish to pay our respect to the victims of slavery, and we will endeavour to work closely with Member States and all stakeholders — including the private sector and civil-society organizations — to eliminate the scourge of modern slavery from the face of the Earth.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Moldova, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Lupan (Republic of Moldova): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States on the occasion of the commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

As stated in the first preambular paragraph of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

> "the recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world".

Despite our common efforts today, there are unfortunately far too many people who continue to face violations of their fundamental rights. Racism and racial discrimination continue to be obstacles that prevent many from living in dignity and prosperity. Modern-day slavery entraps more than 20 million people, according to International Labour Organization data. This enormous figure requires us to enhance efforts to eliminate all forms of slavery.

The mass movement of refugees and migrants fleeing wars, poverty or ill-treatment should be our priority since this category of people is more likely to fall victim to this outrageous practice. The upcoming consultation on the future global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration, as well as the discussion on the future global compact on refugees, to begin next year, provide us with a unique opportunity to effectively and efficiently address these issues.

Respect for human rights remains essential in our efforts towards a world free of slavery. The tenth anniversary of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade provides us with an opportunity to recommit ourselves to protecting and promoting the fundamental rights of all human beings.

Alongside respect for human rights, the promotion of greater knowledge of, and respect for, diverse heritage, culture and contribution is an important part of our efforts to eliminate slavery in all its forms. In that regard, the Group welcomes the focus of this year's meeting on the legacy and contribution of persons of African descent to the overall development of our societies. Many of us are familiar with their rich culture and beautiful traditions, as well as their impact on the economic, social and political life of sm of the United Nations. The impressive exhibition currently on display in the United Nations Visitors Lobby, which features notable personalities of African descent, among them many Nobel prize laureates in fields such as peace and

economics, casts a new light on, and brings attention to, their important contributions to the sustainable development of our countries. We are pleased to see such a contribution through diversity celebrated at the United Nations.

In the light of what I have mentioned, respect for human rights, the promotion of tolerance, as well as the mutual recognition of our achievements and respect for our cultures, are indispensable if we are to build peaceful and prosperous societies in which no one is left behind.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Guatemala, who will speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

Mr. Skinner-Klée (Guatemala): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States.

At the outset, let me express our deep appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this plenary meeting to commemorate the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. May I also acknowledge the presence of Mr. Lonnie Bunch, founding Director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, which is timely considering that the theme this year's observance is "Remember slavery: recognizing the legacy and contribution of people of African descent". Indeed, not only are their roots deep in our social fabric; their science, literature and art are a vivid example of a thriving force that permeates not only culture but politics and social affairs everywhere.

The International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade is a most important ephemerides declared by the General Assembly. It is the pinnacle of a series of events and activities that bring focus and attention to the issue of slavery. It not only is a fitting occasion to reflect on the path travelled, to remember the victims and to honour their sacrifice, but it is also an occasion to address the legacies that remain from that hideous and dark period of human history.

Latin American and Caribbean countries have remained active in the efforts to ensure that the pernicious and dire impacts of slavery are rectified, and have also spearheaded many small, and yet impactful, milestones that to date are part of this commemoration, such as the beautiful and evoking *Ark of Return*, a permanent memorial to and remembrance of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade erected outside the walls of this Hall. Additionally, the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) has been proclaimed and an ambitious programme of activities adopted. We encourage both Member States and the Secretariat to redouble efforts in order to ensure a meaningful and effective implementation of the Decade, while keeping alive the spirit of recognition, justice and development.

The commitments set forth must ensure in a meaningful way that the victims of slavery and their ultimate sacrifice are rectified and translated into opportunities that may transform the reality provided to their descendants, who populate and enrich our region, bringing the diversity and strength that makes our societies strong, as well as multicultural, multi-ethnic and plurilingual.

Approximately 200 million people who identify themselves as being of African descent live in the Americas. Many millions more live in other parts of the world, outside of the African continent. Whether as descendants of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade or, more recently, as migrants, they constitute some of the poorest and most marginalized groups of society, facing, to date, limited access to quality education, health services, housing and social welfare. We must remember that migrants have also made, and continue to make, positive and profound contributions to economic and social development in their host societies. They also create wealth. They can help respond to demographic trends, labour shortages and other challenges in host societies, and add fresh skills and dynamism to their economies.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the lingering effects of slavery have had, and continue to have, an indelible impact on our societies. On the one hand, we have a diversity of ethnicity and culture that translates into valuable human capital. On the other hand, however, we have ingrained a social stratification that originated during the colonial era, when the exploitation of both indigenous and enslaved peoples took place. Latin American and Caribbean States are today determined to achieve a free and pluralistic society where all people enjoy equal rights, where one's prospects and developmental achievements are not conditioned by the colour of one's skin or ethnic origin. We strive for a fully inclusive and peaceful society where all citizens

can progress and have the same opportunities and can, of course, contribute freely to that progress.

We must not forget what was pledged in the United Nations Millennium Declaration:

> "Human beings must respect one other, in all their diversity of belief, culture and language. Differences within and between societies should be neither feared nor repressed, but cherished as a precious asset of humanity. A culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations should be actively promoted." (*resolution 55/2, para. 6*)

Slavery is therefore anathema to the Declaration. In that regard, our aim must be to work to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, economic background or any other status.

As mentioned, science, art and literature are a perfect conduit for promoting dialogue and ensuring inclusive and peaceful societies. Only when human virtues and capacities are freely unleashed will sustaining peace have a chance to prosper and enable younger generations to profit from it. The thinking of such erudite persons as the Nobel Peace Laureate Derek Walcott from Saint Lucia, who was already quoted in the Hall by the Secretary-General and who, sadly, passed away only last week, reflects the rich cultural background of our peoples, as well as the multiple vicissitudes and injustices that they were confronted with. As he so eloquently expressed in "Sea Canes":

> "Half my friends are dead.
> I will make you new ones, said earth.
> No, give me them back, as they were, instead
> with faults and all, I cried.
> ...
> of owls leaving earth's load.
> O earth, the number of friends you keep
> exceeds those left to be loved."

While slavery has taken many different, although subtle, forms in recent times, it is still a horrible manifestation of human cruelty faced by many around the world. In a recent report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, as the Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova just mentioned, it is estimated that more than 20 million people are enslaved in one way or another. Let us note that bigotry, exploitation, discrimination, exclusion and xenophobia are just the more salient forms that constitute modern shades of slavery and must be expelled from contemporary practices. Let us not forget the voice of the voiceless, the invisible and the marginalized and let us shed light for them with justice so they can come out of the dark.

Today is a day to celebrate, but also a day to take stock and to marshal our determination to confront the current challenges of inequality, poverty, colonialism and other prejudices, all of which are contributing elements that held one race to be superior and another inferior. This ignominious conduct must be eradicated in every manifestation or contemporary form.

We in the Americas are mostly a young and a strong people. We are rising, and we will continue to rise, from this unparalleled tragedy in the history of humankind, and we will also overcome contemporary challenges. The liberation of many African men, women and children who endured the torment, torture and attempted dehumanization of slavery and who fought against considerable odds to gain their freedom — those persons from whom many of us are direct descendants — have also taught us never to give up, to continue to be strong, to continue to be bold and to pursue freedom and justice for all.

On this day, the Group of Latin American and the Caribbean States can assure the international community that, while some may choose to look the other way, to close their eyes and deafen their ears, they can never say that they did not know about the brutality and cruelty of the transatlantic slave trade, because we will never let the world forget. Innumerable human beings were subject to the worst kind of suffering, and nobody knows how much blood was shed or how many horrors were endured by the people who were victims of an ignominious and ruthless colonial and imperial system. But it is us who know how to redress those injustices and, in the process, also liberate our minds from wanton prejudice and ignorance.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Germany, who will speak on behalf the Group of Western European and other States.

Mr. Schulz (Germany): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

Every year, this day provides us with an opportunity to come together and to honour the millions of victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. This is a day when we remember the fates of the men, women and children who suffered from these atrocities and reflect on this dark chapter in human history. This is also a day to discuss how to best commemorate the victims and educate our children and future generations about the grave injustice of slavery. This year's theme — "Remember slavery: recognizing the legacy and contributions of people of African descent" — serves those important ends. By highlighting the contributions made by people of African descent to shape societies around the world, we not only commemorate the victims but also pass on crucial lessons to future generations about the causes and consequences of the slave trade and slavery.

Telling the story of the African diaspora — the rich legacy and manifold contributions of its people — also raises awareness of the harm caused by racism, discrimination and prejudice. The vibrant African culture and traditions spread in the diaspora have enriched the very countries once involved in the slave trade and still do to this day. To expose the moral bankruptcy of racial prejudices and discrimination, we must highlight how the influences and accomplishments of people of African descent have enriched us all.

The permanent memorial to the victims of slavery and transatlantic slave trade — *The Ark of Return* — which was unveiled two years ago, is not only a constant reminder of the past, but also a source of inspiration in the ongoing fight against the different forms of slavery that still exist today despite the absolute prohibition of slavery, one of the most powerful international legal norms. Too many people around the world, in particular women and children, still fall victim to human trafficking and sexual exploitation. Armed conflicts, terrorism and humanitarian crises have exposed individuals to increased risks of being trafficked, in conflict zones and beyond. In the 2030 Agenda, all of our countries have committed to eradicating forced labour and ending modern slavery and human trafficking. And the majority of Member States have signed the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. If we are to draw the right conclusions from the past, we must honour our international human rights obligations and redouble our efforts to eradicate the scourge of modern slavery and human trafficking in all their forms.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the United States of America, who will speak on behalf of the host country.

Ms. Amadeo (United States of America): Today we remember the horrors of the transatlantic slave trade. We remember the millions of Africans torn from their families, the countless people who suffered and died from disease, starvation and the most inhumane treatment imaginable as they were put on ships and sold into bondage.

In his autobiographical *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Douglass recalled the six months of his life when he was "made to drink the bitterest dregs of slavery". Douglass said,

> "I was broken in body, soul, and spirit. My natural elasticity was crushed, my intellect languished, the disposition to read departed, the cheerful spark that lingered about my eye died; the dark night of slavery closed in upon me."

Douglass' words remind us why the slave trade will remain an indelible stain on our past. It should always disturb us to our cores that humankind was capable of inflicting such brutality on others, that people would for so long deny the universal human attributes that all of us share. That is why this event is so important, why we honour the victims in the General Assembly every year.

The permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, which the United States helped fund, will help present and future generations recall this crucial lesson on the consequences of racism and bigotry. Just as we recall the suffering of the past, we also rightly celebrate the heroism and selflessness of the many people who fought for abolition, freedom and equality. Their altruism and relentless demands for respect of universal human rights changed the course of history. They included people like Douglass, who became one of the most forceful advocates for abolition after escaping from slavery, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. Their efforts should inspire us to act in defence of the dignity and worth of all people — a central principle of the Charter of the United Nations.

This event therefore serves another important purpose. We must commit to justice in the present by

doing more to confront modern slavery — the horrific practices of human trafficking, including sex trafficking and forced labour. The United States is determined to do more to help in that fight, including through our programme to end modern slavery, a new $250 million initiative to fund transformational projects designed to reduce the prevalence of modern slavery in targeted populations and leverage additional contributions from partners in the private sector and other Governments. We urge others here to join that effort.

Mr. Rahming (Bahamas), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The United States hopes that, once today's event ends, all of us will leave with a renewed commitment to ensuring that no one, in any corner of the world, should live in fear of the horrors of trafficking and slavery.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): I align myself with the statement delivered by the Ambassador of Cabo Verde in his capacity as Chair of the Group of African States.

The commemoration of the abolition of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade organized by the General Assembly on the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade, which marks that tragic history and the theme of which this year is entitled "Remember slavery: recognizing the legacy and contributions of people of African descent", offers us an opportunity to remember a sad and dark chapter from the annals of humankind. That sad history was shared by my country, Equatorial Guinea, and many other countries in the region, hundreds of years ago when those who were sadly labelled Black Pearls or Human Pearls were exported to other countries and the Americas. Following many decades of vile exploitation of human beings at the hands of other human beings, despite the fact that it constituted one of the gravest violations of human rights, slavery became a great multinational undertaking and was even legalized in certain countries.

On this day on which we commemorate and remember that ignominious practice, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea pays tribute and heartfelt homage to those who succumbed under the yoke of slavery and those who fought against it, and my country honours the memory of those who fought against that terrible crime — a colossal form of intolerance and ignoble injustice.

Finally, we welcome and pay tribute to the restoration of the dignity of those who had been stripped of everything. Indeed, the establishment of a permanent memorial here at the United Nations is not only a symbol for educating future generations, but also a reminder to all those who would prefer to forget. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea is very pleased and proud to have contributed to financing the building of the memorial, around which all of humankind, ultimately constituting a family, must manifest its revulsion for such practices and shout out, "May those practices never be repeated in the history of humankind".

Mrs. Rodríguez Camejo (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Guatemala on behalf of the Group of Latin American and the Caribbean States.

Cuba attaches particular importance to the annual commemoration of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. In its belief that it is a subject of particular sensitivity, Cuba supported and co-sponsored resolution 61/19, commemorating the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade and designated today's date, which we honour as a day of commemoration.

The approximately 1.3 million Africans who arrived in Cuba's colonial plantations were taken by force from their villages and families and sold as slave labour on the island. They and their descendants have been the leading actors in the various phases of our struggles leading to our final liberation and greatly contributed to the genesis of our nationality and culture. The Cuban people are extremely proud of their African roots. From Africa, we have inherited our combative spirit, sensitivity, joy, strength in the face of adversity and the love for freedom that characterize Cubans. No other people in the world has contributed as much to forging the Cuban nation as the African people. Cuba, in turn, has contributed the sweat and blood of hundreds of thousands of its children to the emancipation and development of Africa, thereby fulfilling a basic duty of solidarity and internationalism with that continent to which all humankind will forever be indebted.

We therefore welcome the fact that the central theme of the commemorative events of 2017 focuses on recognizing the legacy of and contribution made by the African peoples and their descendants to

today's societies. However, it would be an unforgivable historical mistake to ignore the past or simply try to turn the page. Slavery and the transatlantic slave trade are among the most serious crimes against humanity, the consequences of which have not been duly recognized by today's society. We cannot forget the tragedy and terrible fate that befell the millions of men, women and children whom the transatlantic slave trade uprooted from their homes and who were sent to the Americas and suffered inhuman, unjust and despicable treatment. Much of the world's present wealth is the product of the shame and disgrace that were slavery and the slave trade.

The greatest beneficiaries of conquest, colonization, slavery, the transatlantic slave trade and the ruthless exploitation and extermination of hundreds of millions of children of the peoples of the South must assume their responsibility and offer compensation for the horrendous crimes committed. It is saddening and scandalous that, at the very moment at which this meeting is taking place, more than 15 million people, including 860,000 children, are now at serious risk of dying owing to malnutrition and famine in several African countries, even as some members of the international community remains indifferent.

Cuba firmly supports the just request for compensation raised by the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM). We also advocate the special and differential treatment required by developing countries, particularly in Africa, in connection with their international economic relations. Cuba supports and co-sponsors the relevant draft resolution submitted each year by member countries of CARICOM and the Group of African States. We recognize the importance of strengthening the activities of the United Nations and other international organizations, such as UNESCO, on this matter. That is the least that the international community can do to repair the crime against humanity committed via the transatlantic slave trade.

The Acting President: I would like to inform members that the photo opportunity at the permanent memorial *The Ark of Return* will take place immediately following the adjournment of this meeting, and not at 5 p.m. as originally announced.

We have heard the last speaker in this commemorative meeting. The Assembly has thus concluded the commemorative meeting on the occasion of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to conclude its consideration of agenda item 119?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.

United Nations A/71/PV.74

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

Official Records

74th plenary meeting
Thursday, 6 April 2017, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Thomson ..... (Fiji)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 13 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Draft resolution (A/71/L.60)

The President: I now give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Argentina to introduce draft resolution A/71/L.60.

Mr. García Moritán (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to introduce draft resolution A/71/L.60, entitled "Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day".

I would like to begin by thanking all the countries that are sponsoring this draft resolution and all the delegations that participated actively and constructively in the negotiations.

I would also like to thank the International Council for Small Business (ICSB), in particular its Executive Director, Mr. Ayman El Tarabishy, for all the support and information provided to us from the start of this process. The ICSB held its 61st annual World Conference here at the United Nations last year, which was attended by officials from more than 55 countries. On that occasion, the ICSB made a statement on the urgent need to designate a day recognizing the important role of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises in the development of economies as a whole. That is when the Argentine authorities decided to advance and promote this important initiative in the General Assembly.

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all countries have been working on its implementation and on finding ways to ensure that each actor can contribute in the best possible way. Micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises are one such actor. That has the potential to have a lasting positive impact on the world's development needs given that, in terms of number, they dominate the global business landscape.

Estimated figures indicate that 95 per cent of companies around the world are micro-, small and medium-sized, accounting for approximately 60 per cent of private sector employment. These companies can become engines that sustain growth for long-term development in developing countries. With stronger economic growth, micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises gradually assume a key role in industrial development. They can meet the growing local demand for services, which allows for increasing specialization and, moreover, support large companies with services and consumables.

We hope that the establishment of 27 June as Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day will help raise public awareness of the important role such companies play in many areas of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the many challenges they face.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the translation of speeches delivered in other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-0506 (verbatimrecords@un.org). Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org).

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The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/71/L.60, entitled "Micro-, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day".

I give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Ms. De Miranda (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I should like to announce that since the submission of the draft resolution, and in addition to those delegations listed in the document, the following countries have also become sponsors of A/71/L.60: Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guyana, Haiti, Libya, Myanmar, Nicaragua, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa and Tunisia.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/71/L.60?

Draft resolution A/71/L.60 was adopted (resolution 71/279).

Agenda item 13 and 117 (*continued*)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Draft resolution (A/71/L.58)

The President: I give the floor to the Permanent Representative of Mexico.

Mr. De la Mora Salcedo (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): As members are aware, paragraph 23 of draft resolution A/71/L.58 refers to the phase II preparatory meeting, which is to be held in Mexico in late November. The International Organization for Migration will hold its Council meeting from 28 November to 1 December. That will mean that two significant meetings on international migration are be held at the same time. For that reason, we have been requested to change the dates of the preparatory meeting.

In the light of that request, our intention is to hold the three-day preparatory meeting in early December to ensure that the draft resolution is consistent with the requirements of Member States and to allow for the proper planning of travel arrangement. Therefore, we propose replacing the words "in late November" with the words "in early December".

The President: The representative of Mexico has proposed an oral amendment to draft resolution A/71/L.58. May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to adopt the oral amendment?

The oral amendment was adopted.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/71/L.58, entitled "Modalities for the intergovernmental negotiations of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration", as orally amended. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to adopt it?

Draft resolution A/71/L.58, as orally amended, was adopted (resolution 71/280).

The President: Before giving the floor for explanations of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Amadeo (United States of America): The United States would like to thank the facilitators, you, Mr. President, and the many delegations that worked so hard to negotiate resolution 71/280. The United States joined the consensus on the resolution and looks forward to engaging actively during the preparatory process, the negotiation of the compact and the intergovernmental conference in 2018.

We appreciate the fact that the modalities resolution clarifies the role of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in providing support and expertise throughout the development of a compact and during preparations for an intergovernmental conference. With its extensive migration expertise and presence in nearly 150 countries worldwide, IOM's contributions will be critical during all phases of the compact's development and implementation. We also welcome the new Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration, and we are pleased that Ms. Arbour will play a leadership role in the compact process.

Throughout the negotiation of resolution 71/280, the United States underscored the importance of transparency, particularly with respect to the participation of civil society during the preparatory process and the conference. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academic institutions, private sector actors and other stakeholders play an essential role on issues related to migration. For that reason, the

preparatory process and conference should be open to all concerned parties, including those that do not have consultative status in the Economic and Social Council. Their expertise and participation are essential to the success of the preparatory process, the conference and the implementation of a global migration compact. In that context, we would like to reiterate our belief in the importance of inclusiveness, fairness and transparency in compiling the list of NGOs for participation in the compact preparatory process and conference and in other United Nations summits and high-level meetings.

Any concerns that a State Member of the United Nations may have about an NGO's participation in meetings related to the compact need to be addressed transparently, not behind closed doors. NGOs must not be denied access to United Nations meetings and forums arbitrarily or for political reasons. According to paragraphs 6 (b) and 6 (c) and the corresponding footnote in the resolution, the President of the General Assembly will bring a proposed list and a final list of civil society participants to the attention of the General Assembly for both the preparatory process and the conference. It is only by comparing the proposed and final list that we will see whether an organization has been blocked. This process is inadequate because it will not make clear which Member State objected to the participation of an NGO or why the Member State objected. It is our firm belief that the source and basis of any objection should be shared with the General Assembly.

The United States attaches the greatest importance to the contributions of civil society to the work of the United Nations The compact preparatory process and the conference will have greater value if all legitimate and concerned civil society voices are heard without exception. Each special session, high-level meeting or conference is different, so the language in the resolution concerning civil society participation should not be seen as a precedent for other resolutions. In the future, this organ should strive for more transparent modalities language that will foster robust civil society participation in the work of the United Nations,

Finally, the United States would like to emphasize the importance of transparency regarding cost estimates during the negotiation of General Assembly resolutions. The Secretariat should respect the intent of rule 153 of the General Assembly's rules of procedure and provide Member States with a cost estimate before Member States conclude the informal negotiation of a resolution. The formal adoption of a resolution often occurs a number of a days or weeks after Member States conclude their informal negotiations. In order for Member States to be responsible contributors to the United Nations, the Secretariat must proactively share cost estimates at least 48 hours prior to the conclusion of informal negotiations. Member States must have sufficient time to review cost estimates and consider whether they match the activities envisioned in a draft resolution.

As noted throughout the negotiation process, the United States is interested in ensuring that this process be conducted efficiently. We are pleased that the resolution has established a voluntary trust fund that can and should be used to support the preparatory process and conference in 2018. We urge Member States to contribute to the fund accordingly. The United States looks forward to working with Members States of the United Nations, the Office of the President, the Secretariat, Special Representative of the Secretary-General Arbour, the IOM and all other stakeholders to exchange views on experiences and best practices and to develop a non-binding global migration compact that will result in practical outcomes.

Ms. Pritchard (Canada): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of Australia, New Zealand and my own country, Canada.

First, let me begin my thanking the co-facilitators, Switzerland and Mexico, for their open, transparent, cooperative and collaborative approach to preparing the modalities resolution 71/280. We appreciated the opportunity to discuss ideas throughout the process, and we are on the whole quite pleased with the outcome of the negotiations. We would like to take this opportunity to comment on three aspects of the modalities resolution.

First, human rights and the gender dimensions of international migration should be at the heart of the migration compact. We were disappointed that the language in paragraph 20 in particular was weakened in the final stages of negotiations. We are committed to ensuring that those issues are appropriately addressed and that the international human rights obligations of Member States are reflected throughout all the phases of the process leading toward the development of the global compact.

Secondly, we fully support efforts to make the process of including civil society organizations more open and inclusive. Nevertheless, we would have

preferred to see more inclusive language on participation by civil society, as civil society actors will play a critical and wide-ranging role in the global compact process. We believe that the language providing for participation on a non-objection basis may not provide an adequate level of transparency and accountability, and we would encourage Member States to exercise restraint in any objections.

Finally, we would also like to reiterate our support for the role of national human rights institutions in the process. Such institutions are unique, independent bodies created by State legislation or by constitutions that have broad human rights mandates that allow them to apply the full range of international human rights norms and standards in their work. They are well positioned to support the process of the development and implementation of the global compact, and we would encourage their participation to the greatest extent possible.

As members are aware, we very much support the decision to hold thematic and regional consultations as a first step to developing the compact before negotiations. We remain committed to actively engaging in the process to develop the migration compact as the consultations get under way, and we look forward to working with all delegations in that regard.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of position.

We shall now hear statements after the adoption of the resolution 71/280.

I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Ms. Voutounou (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its member States.

At the outset allow me to congratulate you, Mr. President, on the successful outcome of the negotiations on resolution 71/280, entitled "Modalities for the intergovernmental negotiations of the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration". In particular, let me thank the co-facilitators and their teams for their efforts to bring this important exercise to a successful conclusion.

These modalities lay the basis for our joint work in the next two years and will ensure the successful adoption of the global compact for migration in September 2018. We also note with satisfaction a growing awareness of the truly global nature of migration issues, as well as an understanding of the need for global consensus and cooperation.

While recognizing the efforts of the facilitators in finding common ground and the flexibility of all partners, the European Union and its States members regret that it was not possible to include a reference to the non-legal and binding nature of the outcome document. While we remain committed to engage constructively in the upcoming negotiations, it is our understanding that our discussion will result in an action-oriented document that will not be legally binding. We have stressed that throughout the negotiations for the modalities resolution. Although it is not reflected in the document, we consider that the basis for our future engagement.

The President: I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Ambassador Juan José Gómez Camacho of Mexico and Ambassador Jürg Lauberof Switzerland, the co-facilitators of the informal consultations, who demonstrated great ability and patience in their conduct of the discussions and complex negotiations on resolution 71/280. I also thank Member States for their valuable contributions to reaching an agreement on the resolution.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda items 13 and 117.

Reports of the Fifth Committee

The President: The General Assembly will now consider the reports of the Fifth Committee on agenda items 133, 134, 140 and 148.

I request the Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee, Ms. Diana Minyi Lee of Singapore, to introduce in one intervention the reports of the Fifth Committee before the Assembly.

Ms. Lee (Singapore), Rapporteur of the Fifth Committee: I have the honour to introduce to the General Assembly the reports of the Fifth Committee, which contain recommendations on issues considered during the first part of the resumed seventy-first session of the General Assembly. The Fifth Committee met from 6 to 31 March and held five plenary meetings, as well as numerous informal and informal-informal consultations. The Committee's report on agenda item 115, "Appointments to fill vacancies in subsidiary

organs and other appointments", was already considered by the Assembly at its seventieth plenary meeting on 8 March.

Let me now introduce the additional reports of the Fifth Committee, which contain recommendations on issues that require action by the General Assembly.

Under agenda item 134, "Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017", in paragraph 6 of its report contained in document A/71/716/Add.1, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution on special subjects relating to the programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote. Under the same agenda item, the Committee provides advice to the General Assembly on programme budget implications should it adopt draft resolution A/71/L.58. The relevant report of the Fifth Committee is contained in document A/71/854.

Under agenda item 140, "Joint Inspection Unit", in paragraph 6 of its report contained in document A/71/855 the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution, which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

On agenda item 148, "Financing of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals", in paragraph 6 of its report contained in document A/71/704/Add.1 the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution that was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

On agenda item 133, "Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations", in paragraph 8 of its report contained in document A/71/717/Add.1 the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution entitled "Progress towards an accountability framework in the United Nations Secretariat", which was adopted by the Committee without a vote. In paragraph 9 of the same report, the Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the draft decision entitled "Questions deferred for future consideration", which was adopted by the Committee without a vote.

I thank delegations for their cooperation during this session and for the spirit of compromise, which enabled the Committee to finish its work on time.

I would also like to thank the Chair of the Committee, Ambassador Rhonda King, for her guidance and encouragement. I look forward to working with her and my fellow members of the Bureau in preparation for and towards the success of the forthcoming second resumed session in May.

Finally, please allow me to thank and acknowledge the members of the Secretariat who have worked tirelessly to support the Committee: Ms. Sharon Van Buerle; Ms. Sarah Mueller; Ms. Lindsay Edwards; Ms. Geraldine Velandria; Ms. Rogena Inductivo; Ms. Ilene McGrade; Ms. Ivanka Sporysova; Mr. Joseph Nemeth; Mr. Andrew Kowalchuk; and Mr. Bobby Strano.

The President: On behalf of the General Assembly, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Her Excellency Ms. Inga Rhonda King, the Permanent Representative of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to the United Nations and Chair of the Fifth Committee, the members of the Bureau, the Secretary of the Committee and representatives for completing the work of the Committee in an efficient and timely manner and for a job well done. I congratulate all of them.

If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the reports of the Fifth Committee that are before the Assembly today.

It was so decided.

The President: Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote. The positions of delegations regarding the recommendations of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records. May I remind delegations that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401, the General Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered a main committee and in a plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in the plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee."

May I further remind delegations that, also in accordance with decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Before we begin to take action on the recommendations contained in the reports of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that

we are going to proceed to take decisions in the same manner as was done in the Fifth Committee, unless notified otherwise in advance. That means that we will proceed to adopt without a vote those recommendations that were adopted without a vote in the Committee.

Agenda item 134 (*continued*)

Programme budget for the biennium 2016-2017

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/716/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

We will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/272 B).

The President: I call on the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic, who wishes to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Awad (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Concerning part I of resolution 71/272 B, my delegation has a reservation with regard to allocating funds to the United Nations Monitoring Mechanism for the Syrian Arab Republic. It is an unjustified decision that reflects well-known positions of some Member States that are inimical to my country. Some of these States support armed terrorist groups wreaking havoc in my country. Furthermore, the Mechanism has proved to be paralysed and ineffective. We therefore believe that assistance should be provided from within Syrian territory and in full cooperation and coordination with the Syrian Government.

In this regard, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic stresses its principled, firm position on the provision of humanitarian assistance to all those in need without discrimination in accordance with our constitutional obligations. We also stress that we shall continue to cooperate with the United Nations and its agencies to provide humanitarian assistance as long as the United Nations guidelines relating to humanitarian assistance are respected, as reflected in the annex to resolution 46/182, pertaining to the provision of humanitarian assistance, which must be done in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality.

Syria believes that resolution 71/282 B is not credible, either in numbers of beneficiaries or in the amount of assistance that have been distributed. We also reject allegations and reports of the Secretary-General that the mission provided humanitarian assistance without incident or complaints from any party.

My delegation joined the consensus on part VII of the resolution, which relates to special political missions, good offices and other political initiatives authorized by the General Assembly and/or the Security Council, including the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons-United Nations Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM). This proceeds from our principled position on the condemnation of chemical weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. The use of such weapons is immoral and unacceptable. We did so although we reject all allegations and accusations in the report of the JIM, which are not neutral, not objective and have many illegal defects that affect its credibility.

My delegation also stresses its objection to funding from the Trust Fund that was created through voluntary contributions outside the regular budget. The Fund will be used in a political manner outside the purview of the membership of the General Assembly. Our objection also takes into consideration the fact that Security Council resolutions 2235 (2015) and 2319 (2016) did not take up the issue of funding. Therefore, according to current procedures, the Mechanism should be funded in full from the regular budget of the United Nations, in order to ensure that contributing States do not interfere in its operations, particularly those Member States well known for their positions inimical to my country and their support for terrorist armed groups attempting to destroy my country on their behalf.

In conclusion, my Government is committed to fulfilling all the obligations it undertook on when it joined the Chemical Weapons Convention and reiterates its determination to rid the country of all chemical weapons.

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 134.

Agenda item 140

Joint Inspection Unit

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/855)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

We shall now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/281).

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 140.

Agenda item 148 (*continued*)

Financing of the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/704/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution, entitled "Construction of a new facility for the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals, Arusha branch", recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 6 of its report.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/282).

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 148.

Agenda item 133 (*continued*)

Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/71/717/Add.1)

The President: The Assembly has before it a draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 8 of its report and a draft decision recommended in paragraph 9 of the same report. We shall now take action on the draft resolution and the draft decision, one by one.

The Assembly will now take action on the draft resolution, entitled "Progress towards an accountability system in the United Nations Secretariat", contained in paragraph 8 of the report. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 71/283).

The President: The Assembly will now take action on the draft decision, entitled "Questions deferred for future consideration", contained in paragraph 9 of the report. The Fifth Committee adopted it without a vote. May I take it that the Assembly wishes to do likewise?

The draft decision was adopted (decision 71/546 B).

The President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 133.

The General Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of all the reports of the Fifth Committee before it for this meeting.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.